

Consultation on the proposed closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School in August 2025



Consultation period: 11th February 2025 to 31st March 2025

About the proposals and the school

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School is a one form entry (1FE) primary school in the Rye Lane ward of Peckham. For place planning purposes, the school is situated in Council's "Planning Area 3" (PA3) – Peckham & Nunhead. The school has struggled to recruit to reception and overall numbers have fallen considerably in recent years. It is for this reason the Council are considering a range of options for the future of the school, including permanent closure. This consultation will allow us to evaluate these options and the effects of closure.

The Council proposals

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School has been a 1FE primary since it opened. Rolls have remained low at the school for some time, and reception over the last 6 years has fallen some way short of the 30 places it can offer. As schools are funded according to the number of children attending this has placed a financial and organisational stress on the school, leaving it with less resources for the education of children.

Southwark council agreed a 'Keeping Education Strong' strategy to address the issue of surplus places in Southwark schools in 2022 and following an independent review in 2023, the council's Cabinet agreed to explore options for the future of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School. The council and the school have explored the possibility of an amalgamation with a number of schools and the school has also explored joining a Multi Academy Trust. These options have not proved feasible.

The Council is now consulting on a proposal to close St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School from 31st August 2025.

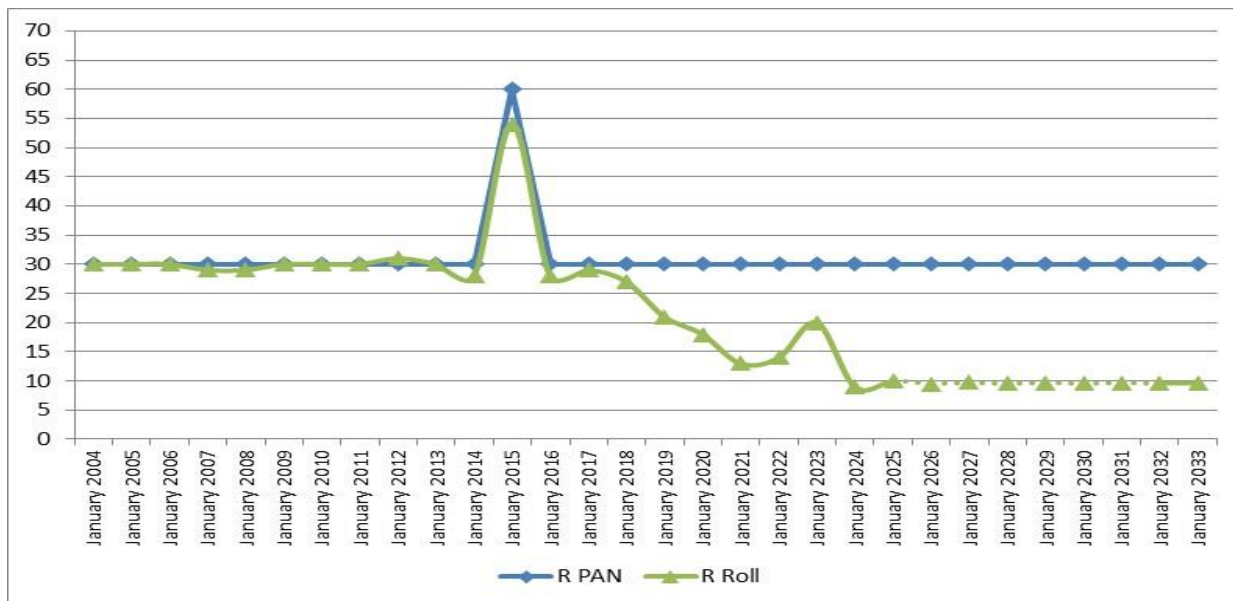
Falling Rolls

Falling numbers of school age children is a London wide issue. 1200 fewer Southwark children are expected to start in Reception this year than ten years ago and St Mary Magdalene is one of the schools that has been strongly affected by this trend.

Overall, the school's roll at reception has fallen from 28 in 2014 to 10 in September 2024 – a reduction of 64%. The roll in 2014 in all year groups was 200, and in

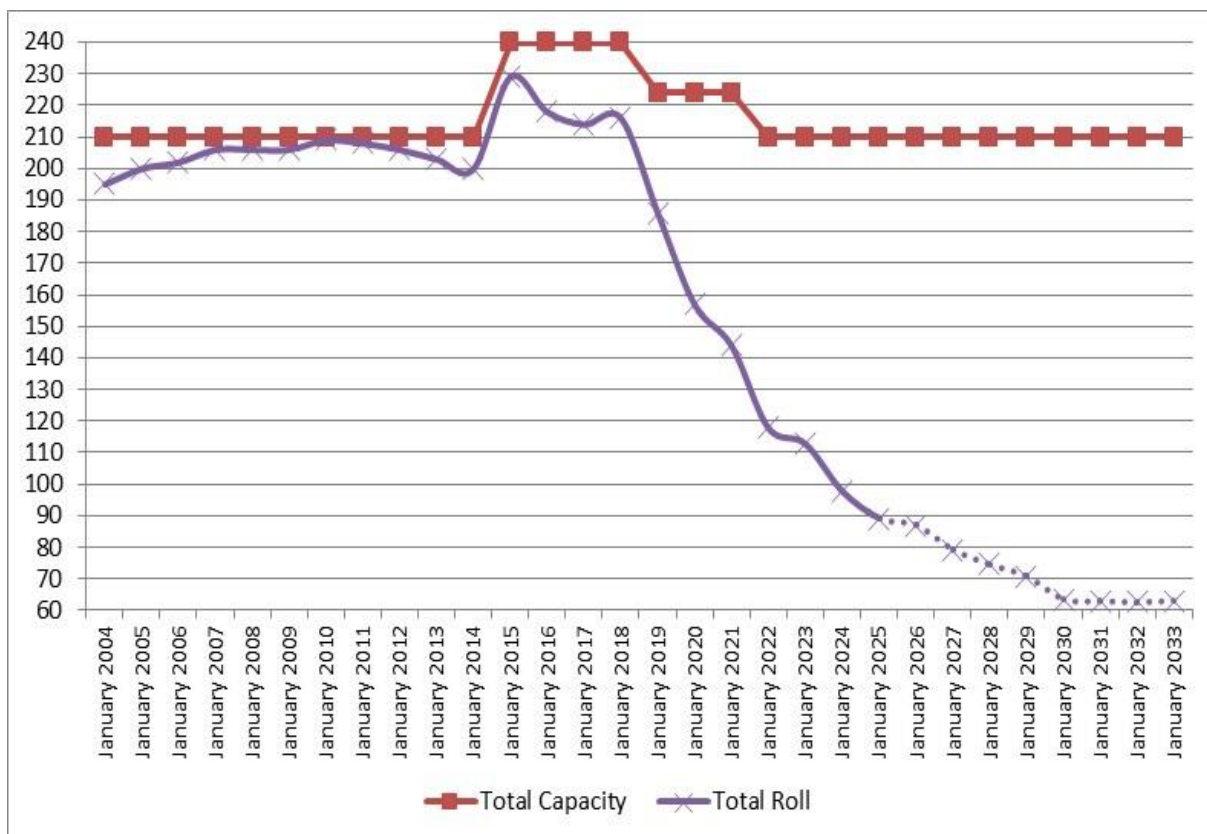
September 2024 was 89, a reduction of 56%. The school's roll is unlikely to recover based on GLA predictions. Vacancies at the school overall across all year groups have risen from 10 in 2014 (5%) to 140 in September 2023 (67%), a thirteenfold increase in the percentage of vacancies and leaving the school more than half empty.

Reception Rolls (Green) against Published Admission Number capacity (Blue) – 2004-2025 (actual) and 2026-33 (projected – dotted lines), were the school to remain open



Similarly, figures for the whole school show a steady decline since 2015/16 and this projecting forward into the future.

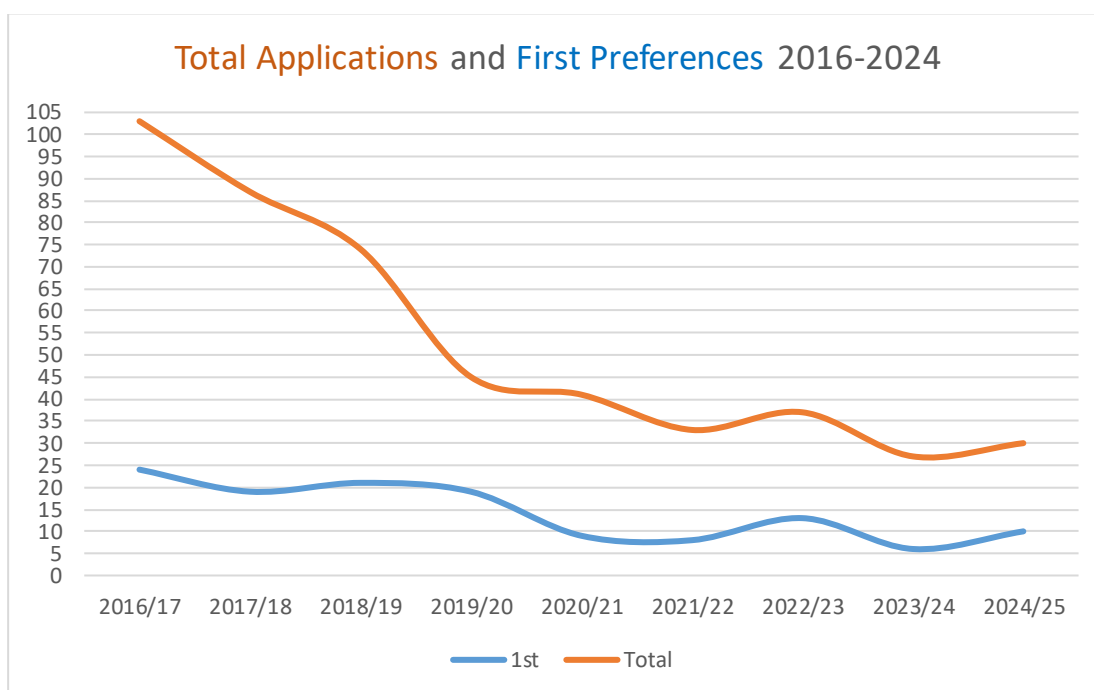
Whole school (YR-Y6) Rolls (Purple) against PAN (Red) – 2004-2025 (actual) and 2026-33 (projected – dotted lines) were the school to remain open



Falling numbers of applications and births

Applications to the school at reception have also fallen considerably. Since 2016, the overall number of applications has fallen from 103 to 30, a reduction of **71%**. Similarly, for 1st preferences, numbers have reduced by **58%**, and 1st to 3rd preferences by **67%**

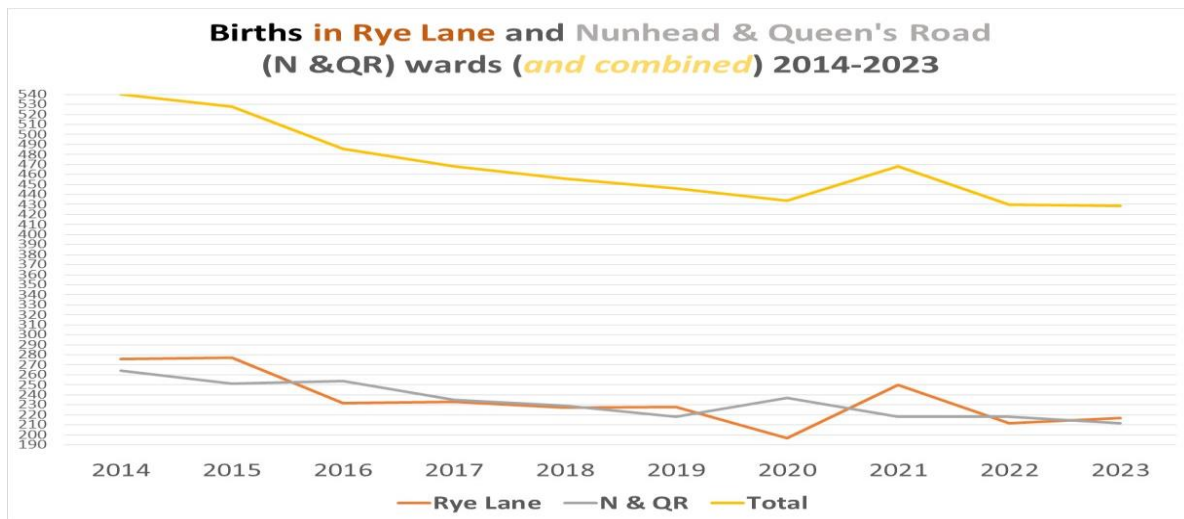
| Year | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th | 5 th | 6 th | Total | PAN | 1-3 |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-----|-----|
| 2016/17 | 24 | 23 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 103 | 30 | 61 |
| 2017/18 | 19 | 21 | 17 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 87 | 30 | 57 |
| 2018/19 | 21 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 74 | 30 | 50 |
| 2019/20 | 19 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 45 | 30 | 34 |
| 2020/21 | 9 | 18 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 41 | 30 | 32 |
| 2021/22 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 33 | 30 | 19 |
| 2022/23 | 13 | 13 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 37 | 30 | 28 |
| 2023/24 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 27 | 30 | 19 |
| 2024/25 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 30 | 30 | 21 |



Birth trends

Births in the Rye Lane ward (where the school is situated) and Nunhead & Queen's Road ward – where together over 65% of its pupils come from – have reduced since 2014 by 72 – and are 13% lower in 2021 than in 2016, and are projected to have fallen a further 8% in 2022/23

| Year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Rye Lane | 276 | 277 | 232 | 233 | 227 | 228 | 197 | 250 | 212 | 217 |
| N & QR | 264 | 251 | 254 | 235 | 229 | 218 | 237 | 218 | 218 | 212 |
| Total | 527 | 531 | 467 | 456 | 446 | 426 | 429 | 428 | 430 | 429 |



As schools are funded primarily on a per pupil basis, falling rolls result in reduced budgets. This in turn impacts on the resources available to support a high quality of education.

The council has assessed 6 possible options for the school going forward

| Option | Appraisal |
|--|---|
| Option 1: Reduction to 0.5FE – that is moving towards having 15 children in each year. | A school with an overall roll of 105 would struggle to be financially viable – and would lack the resilience larger schools have to cover for staff absence and resource deployment. In any event it is unlikely that the school would be full even with this lower roll. |
| Option 2: Forming a hard federation with another school or an amalgamation | A hard federation would not substantively address the low rolls the school is presently experiencing and the resulting financial impact. Potential mergers and amalgamations with other schools have been explored but no suitable option has been identified. |
| Option 3: Entering into an arrangement with a Multi Academy Trust | The school explored joining a MAT in 2023 but the MAT's view was that there was a risk that the school would not be viable and this did not proceed. Joining a MAT would not address the falling rolls issue. |
| Option 4: Keeping the status quo at St Mary Magdalene CE | This is unviable in the short to medium term as there is no prospect of rolls and/or pupil numbers recovering, and the school debt is increasing |
| Option 5: Setting the PAN to zero and slow closure over a number of years. | This would allow for a longer period to transfer pupils but with numbers of children attending falling the school's financial position would worsen with a significant deficit projected. This would in turn limit the resources available for education and threaten standards in a school that has already been judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted. |
| Option 6: Closure of the school in August 2025 | This would seem to be the only viable option having explored other ways forward. |

The statutory closure proposal

Southwark Council as a nominated body, can propose the closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School. The council is proposing the closure of the school by 31st August 2025. To do this, the council must follow statutory processes that involve consultation, required by government guidance and legislation. This consultation document has been published by the Council to this end.

Reasons for the proposed closure

After consideration of all the above options for St. Mary Magdalene CE Primary, Southwark council recommends the closure of St. Mary Magdalene CE Primary from August 31st 2025 to ensure that children are able to access their education in viable schools with resources available to ensure that they can continue to receive a high quality education.

Is there sufficient space at other primary schools for all St Mary Magdalene CE pupils?

Southwark is confident that all children presently attending St. Mary Magdalene CE Primary School and all applicants to reception for September 2025 can be accommodated in alternative schools within a reasonable distance. There are currently- in December 2024 - 767 vacant places across all year groups in 9 Southwark schools which are within 0.75 miles of the school (845 if you include the 2 Lewisham schools within the same distance), many times the existing numbers on roll. Presently there are 86 reception places vacant at these schools – nearly 3 times the PAN of the school.

Statutory requirements

In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance: *Opening and closing maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, January 2023* and Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 as amended by the Education Act 2011 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 the Local Authority (LA) will be following the statutory process for closing a maintained school which consists of 5 stages

Stage one: consultation - it is a statutory requirement for the Council should consult any parties they think are appropriate before publishing concrete proposals. The consultation will last until the end of March 2025 to allow the widest possible canvassing of views. The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of and engage with those that will be directly affected by the proposed closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School. It is also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration on the proposed closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School in August 2025.

Stage two: Publication – After the Consultation outlined above, the Council will analyse the results and decide whether to proceed with publication of formal proposals (known as statutory proposals) to close the school. If they do decide to proceed, statutory notices alerting stakeholders to the proposals will be published in the Southwark News, on the Council's website and will be displayed at the entrances to the school. The proposals will invite further comment on the proposed closure plans, and such comments would be made during the next phase, the "representation" period. This would be expected to take place in April 2025.

Stage three: Representation – If it is decided to proceed with the publication of statutory proposals, the "representation" period will begin on the date of publication of the statutory proposals and will last for four weeks. This period would be during April 2025 to May 2025. Any person would be able to send objections or comments on the proposal to Southwark Council.

Stage four: decision – Within 2 months of the end of the representation period, the Council's Cabinet must meet to discuss and make a decision on whether or not to close St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School. Please note that although the initial consultation and the statutory proposals are put forward by the Council, and the governing body are consulted, the decision on whether or not to close the school *must* be made by the Council's Cabinet alone. The Cabinet would be expected make its decision in June 2025.

Stage five: implementation – If the Council's Cabinet decides to close the school this would take effect from 31st August 2025.

Potential Impact of proposed closure on pupils, parents and carers

If the closure is approved for August 31st 2025, Southwark Council has confirmed that there is sufficient capacity at other primary schools in the locality for families to be able to secure an alternative place for their children from September 2025 onwards. While the Council is not pre-empting the outcome of the process, it has ascertained that sufficient capacity exists for all children who wish to take up a place if closure is approved.

Potential Impact of the proposed closure on staff

The SDBE and Southwark Council recognise the significant impact that the proposed closure may have on staff members and are committed to working together to support staff regarding their current roles and future employment prospects. The collaborative efforts will focus on professional development, career guidance and workshops.

Potential impact of the proposed closure on the Community

Local residents will have the opportunity to express their views during this consultation and any following representation period.

School Places

School roll projections indicate the level of existing and future demand for primary school places across the Borough and specifically, in the locality of the school in Peckham and Nunhead. This will continue to be reviewed and monitored by the Council, but existing rolls and projections in this area show a low level of demand at reception and whole school level until at least September 2033.

We are consulting with...

Staff, parents/carers, the local community on the proposed closure of the schools. In addition, we will welcome the views of

- *All schools/admission authorities in Southwark, governing bodies and academy trusts*
- *Neighbouring Councils*
- *Councillors*
- *The SDBE and the Catholic Diocese*
- *Trade Unions*

Consultation period

This consultation will run from 11th February 2025 to the 31st March 2025, during this time you are invited to respond to the Council on its proposal to close the school. There will be meetings at the school and online for you to feed back your views to the school and the Council.

Timetable for decision making (final dates may be subject to change)

| Stage | Dates |
|--|---|
| Stage 1: Statutory Consultation with interested parties | 11 th February 2025 to 31 st March 2025 |
| Stage 2: Publication of statutory proposals (<i>If agreement to proceed is reached, following consideration of responses to the consultation in Stage 1</i>) | April 2025 |
| Stage 3: Representation | April 2025 to May 2025 |
| Stage 4: Cabinet decision | June 2025 |
| Stage 5: Implementation | 31 st August 2025 |

How to give your views:

This consultation allows anyone with an interest to comment or raise any concerns about the proposal to close St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School in August 2024. We welcome you to complete the questionnaire as detailed below, and to join a statutory consultation meeting that will be held in February 2025 (date to be advised)

- Complete the online form at <https://engage.southwark.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/st-mary-magdalene>
OR
- Complete the form on your phone at the QR code opposite
OR
- Complete the form attached and email the response to: questions.education@southwark.gov.uk



Responses **must** be completed and returned by **5pm on the 31st March 2025**.

We strongly encourage responses to be submitted electronically either via the online questionnaire or by email where possible. Please request a paper copy of the questionnaire if you are unable to respond online.

What happens next?

After the consultation closing date of **31st March 2025**, responses will be analysed and a consultation report produced. The outcomes report will be shared with the Council and school Governing Body. The Lead Member for Education will then decide whether to publish proposals as a result of responses received and taking into account all perspectives.

Consultation on the proposed closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary Schools

Questionnaire

1) Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposed closure of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School (please tick)

- I support the proposed school closure
I do not support the proposed school closure
I am unsure

2) If you do, or do not support the proposed closure, please tell us why.

3) We are keen to understand how the proposed school closure may affect you. Please use this space to tell us if you are impacted by the proposed school closure and how. What can we do to address any impacts you have mentioned?

4) Do you have any alternative suggestions to any part of the proposal?



About You

We want to receive comments from the broadest range of people possible to reflect the opinion of our community. In order to enable us to assess the degree to which this has been successful, it would be helpful if you could take a moment to complete the section below. The Governing Body will ensure that any data provided will be protected against loss or misuse. Your information will not be retained or shared with any other parties and will be destroyed in line with relevant destruction policies and processes.

Please tell us who you are (please tick)

- Member of staff at St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School
Member of staff at another school
School Governor at St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School
School Governor at another school
Parent/carer of a child/children at St Mary Magdalene CE
Parent/carer of child/children at another school
Local resident
Prefer not to say
Other (Please specify) _____

If you live in Southwark, which Community Area do you live in?

(Please choose one)

- Bermondsey Borough & Bankside Camberwell Dulwich
Elephant & Castle Nunhead Peckham Rotherhithe Walworth
Other (please state) _____ Not applicable Prefer not to say

Age (please tick)

- Under 16 16-17 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54
55-64 65-74 75-84 85-94 95+ Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (please tick)

- White British White Irish White European
Other White Mixed White & Black Caribbean
Mixed White & Black African Mixed White & Asian
Other Mixed background Asian or Asian British: Indian
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British: Chinese Other Asian or Asian British Background
Black or Black British: Caribbean Black or Black British: African
Other Black/Black British Arabic
Prefer not to say Other (please specify) _____

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (please tick)

- No Yes Prefer not to say

If the above question is "yes", please specify your disability (please tick)

- Physical/mobility Hearing/Visual impairment Hearing impairment
Mental Health Learning disability Long term illness Other
Prefer not to say

What is your sex as recorded at birth (please tick)

- Male Female Other Prefer not to say

Is your gender now the same as recorded at birth?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

If no, how would you describe your gender identity?

Transgender Non-binary Other Prefer to self-describe Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation

Heterosexual/Straight Lesbian/gay woman Gay man/homosexual Bisexual
Other (please specify) _____ Prefer not to say

What is your religion or belief?

Christian Sikh Hindu Muslim Jewish Buddhist No religion
Other (please specify) Prefer not to say

Approximately, what is your annual household income?

Under £15,000 £15,000 to £29,999 £30,000 to £44,999 £45,000 to £59,999
£60,000 to £74,999 £75,000 to £89,999 £90,000 or above Prefer not to say

What is your current housing situation?

I own my home outright I am buying my home with the help of a mortgage
I rent from a Housing Association Shared Ownership I rent from the Council
I am the home owner of a Council property I rent from a private landlord
I live with family/friends rent free Other (please specify) _____
Prefer not to say