



# 9. Social care

*Borough residents generally have a higher than average need for social care services, reflecting the borough's high levels of deprivation.*

## Chapter Summary:

- In March 2017, there were 2,535 children in need, 381 children subject to a child protection plan, and 335 looked after children in Tower Hamlets. The borough has a relatively high level of need for children's social care services.
- Emotional abuse is the most common reason for children to be subject to a child protection plan. Tower Hamlets also has a higher prevalence of children experiencing physical abuse than in London (19 vs. 6 per cent of child protection plans).
- Abuse or neglect is the most common reason for children being looked after. 72 per cent of looked after children are in foster placements.
- Children's services were rated inadequate by Ofsted in early 2017. The council has taken immediate action to improve and administrative data indicates that the numbers of child protection plans and looked after children are now falling.
- As of January 2018, about 500 families with multiple problems have been helped to achieve a positive outcome through the council's Supporting Stronger Families Programme.
- In 2016/17, 765 adult residents received short-term reablement support to regain their independence after a period of ill health. 78 per cent of older people using the service remained independent after 90 days.
- 3,720 borough residents received long-term support from adult social care in 2016/17. The majority of social care users (62 per cent) say they are satisfied with their care and support.
- Tower Hamlets has the highest rate of social care need for older residents (aged 65 and over) in the country, at a rate of 12,235 service users per 100,000 population compared with 7,515 in London and 5,845 in England.
- 1,262 carers accessed support from adult social care in 2016/17. Carers report a low quality of life as well as impacts on their health and finances.
- Local authorities across England face significant pressures to provide adult social care services due to increased need and reduced funding.

## Introduction

Supporting the social care needs of vulnerable residents – both children and adults – is a statutory function for the council. There are many different services which fall under the umbrella of 'social care'.

For children and young people, social care includes services for children who are disabled or need support to achieve a good standard of health and development, services to protect and safeguard those who are at risk of harm, and children who need to be housed by the local authority. In 2016/17, children's social services received a total of 2,626 referrals for children.<sup>1</sup>

Compared with other areas in the country, Tower Hamlets has a relatively high level of children's social care need. This reflects that the borough has the highest rate of child poverty nationally, with 31 per cent of children living in families below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> Nearly four in five children (79 per cent) live in families who rely on tax credits.<sup>3</sup>

For adults, social care services support people who are disabled, ill, frail, elderly or otherwise vulnerable to live independently. The council also supports the friends and family of people who care for them. There are many different types of support provided to adult social care users, including information and advice, activities and day centres, specialist housing, therapies and equipment to help with day-to-day tasks, support for people leaving hospital, and direct payments. In 2016/17, 765 adults received short-term reablement services to help them regain their independence after a period of ill health<sup>4</sup> and 3,720 received long-term support<sup>5</sup>.

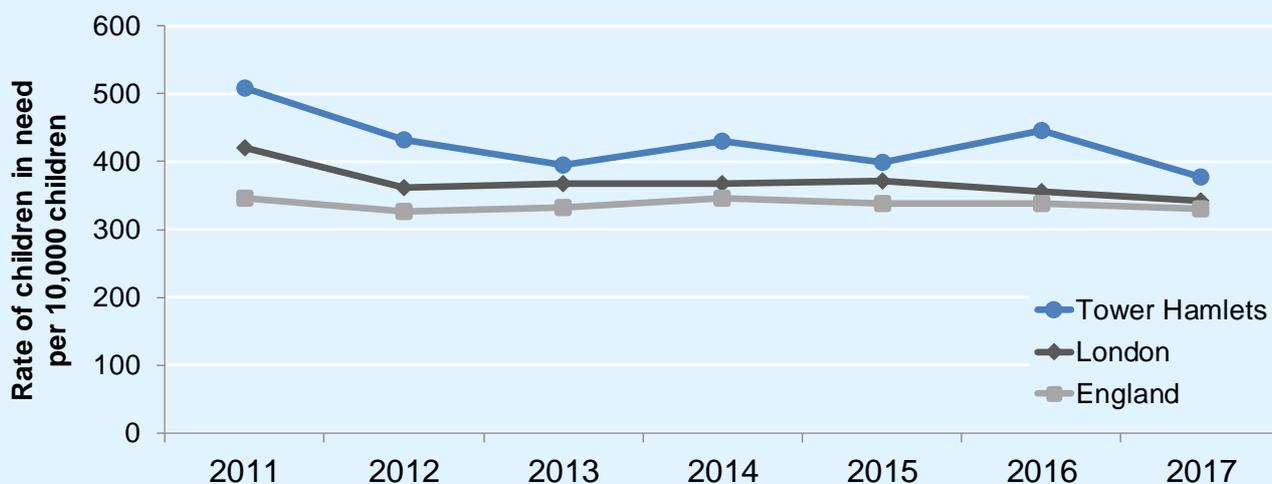
Compared with other areas, Tower Hamlets has a lower than average rate of social care need for working age residents, but the highest rate in the country for residents aged 65 and over. Again, this reflects high levels of deprivation in the borough. Tower Hamlets has the highest rate of pensioner poverty in the country, with half (50 per cent) of the borough's older people living in income-deprived households, compared with 16 per cent nationally.<sup>6</sup>

## Children in need

A child is considered 'in need' if they are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development; if their health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired without the provision of services; or if they are disabled.

In March 2017, there were 2,535 children identified as 'children in need' in Tower Hamlets. This equates to a rate of 377.3 children in need per 10,000 children which is slightly higher than the rates in London (343.1) and in England (330.4), and ranks the borough as having the 11<sup>th</sup> highest rate in London (out of 33 boroughs). However, [Figure 9.1](#) shows that the borough's rate has fallen in recent years, down from 508 children in need per 10,000 children in 2011.

**Figure 9.1: Rate of children in need per 10,000 children, as at 31 March each year, 2011 to 2017**



Source: Department for Education, Characteristics of children in need, 2010-11 to 2016-17. See tables 6 (2010/11) and B1 (all other years).

Tower Hamlets also has a slightly higher proportion of children whose episode of need (measured as the time between when a child is referred and the case is closed) lasted for one year or more. In 2017, 26.5 per cent of children in Tower Hamlets experienced an episode of need lasting one year or more compared with 20.6 per cent in London and 21.1 per cent in England.<sup>7</sup>

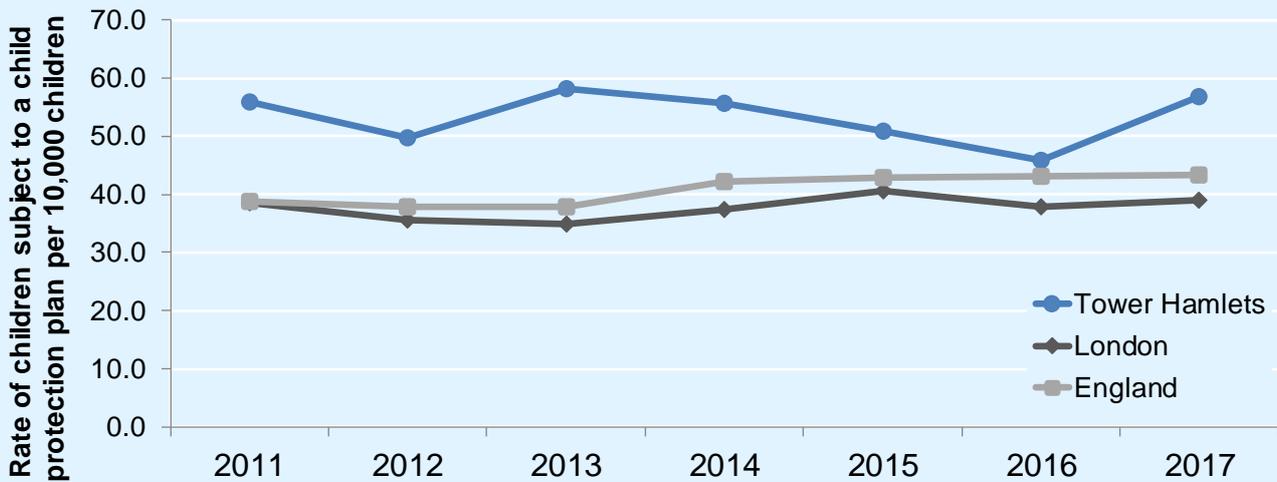
### Child protection plans

The council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of children. In situations where the council assesses that a child is at risk of harm, a child protection plan is drawn up to identify actions to promote the child's welfare.

In March 2017, there were 381 children who were subject to a child protection plan in Tower Hamlets.<sup>8</sup> This equates to 56.7 child protection plans per 10,000 children in the borough which in was the second highest rate in London in 2017, next to Wandsworth (64.6). It was also well above the average in England (43.3) and in London (39.1).

Figure 9.2 shows that in recent years, the rate of child protection plans in Tower Hamlets has fluctuated over time. After 2013, this rate fell year on year to nearly reach the England average in 2016, but increased again in 2017.

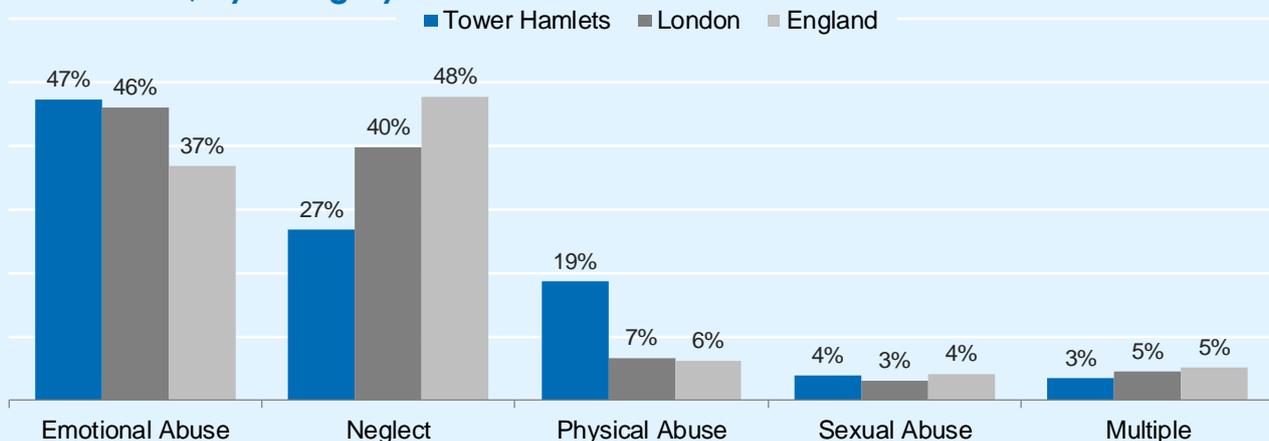
**Figure 9.2: Rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 children, as at 31 March each year, 2011 to 2017**



Source: Department for Education, Characteristics of children in need, 2010-11 to 2016-17. See tables 18 (2010/11) and D1 (all other years).

The most common reason for children being subject to a child protection plan in Tower Hamlets is emotional abuse, accounting for nearly half (47 per cent) of child protection plans in 2017. Figure 9.3 shows that this is in line with the trend in London, but the borough has a lower proportion of children experiencing neglect than in London and England, and a higher proportion of children experiencing physical abuse.

**Figure 9.3: Proportion of children subject to a child protection plan as at 31 March 2017, by category of abuse**



Source: Department for Education, Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017. See Table D4. Figures relate to latest category of abuse.

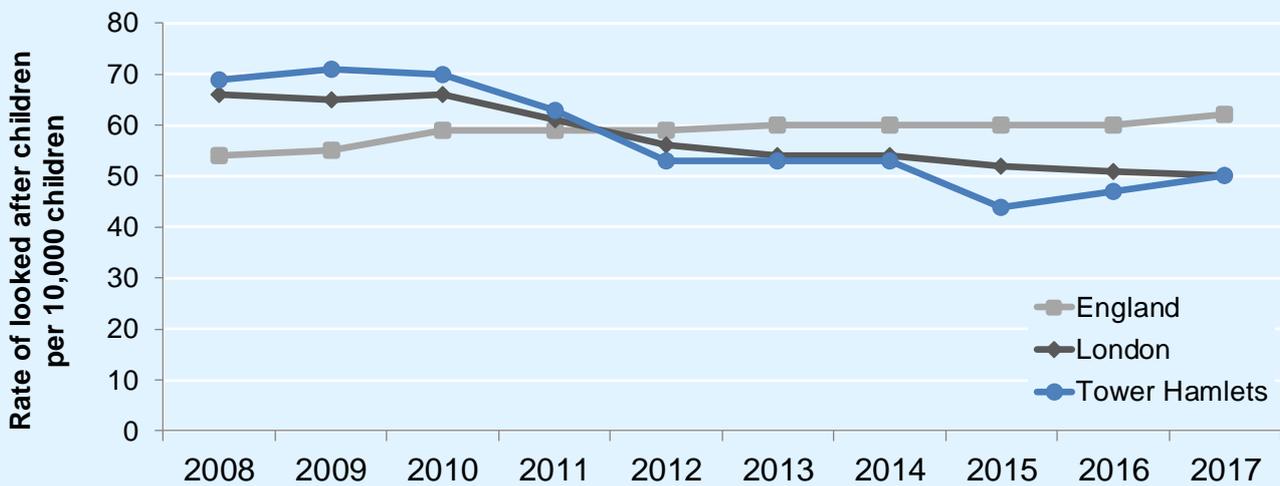
While Tower Hamlets has a higher than average rate of child protection plans, the borough has a lower proportion of children who are subject to a plan more than once. In 2016/17, 12.2 per cent of child protection plans were a second or subsequent plan for a child, compared with 14.8 per cent in London and 18.7 per cent in England.<sup>9</sup>

## Looked after children

When a child is at significant risk of harm, they are taken into the care of the council and known as a 'looked after child'. Looked after children may be living in a residential children's home, with foster parents, or at home under the supervision of social services.

In March 2017, there were 335 looked after children in Tower Hamlets.<sup>10</sup> This equates to a rate of 50 looked after children per 10,000 children – the same as the rate in London and lower than the rate in England (62 looked after children per 10,000 children). [Figure 9.4](#) shows that the rate in both Tower Hamlets and London has been falling over the past decade, while it has been slowly rising in England as a whole.

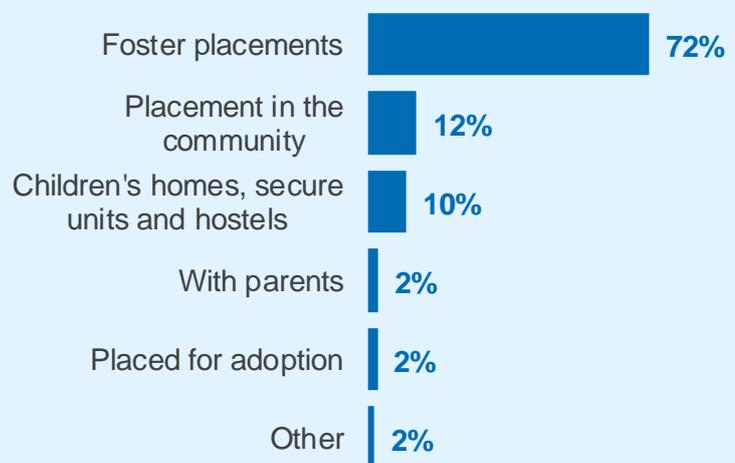
**Figure 9.4: Rate of looked after children per 10,000 children, as at 31 March each year, 2008 to 2017**



Source: Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption: 2011 to 2012 & 2016 to 2017, Table LAA1 (time series).

[Figure 9.5](#) shows that around three quarters of looked after children in March 2017 (72 per cent) were in foster placements. 12 per cent of children were placed in the community, and 10 per cent were placed in a children's home, secure unit or hostel. Very small proportions were placed with their parents (2%) or placed for adoption (2%). These proportions are similar to those in London and England as a whole.

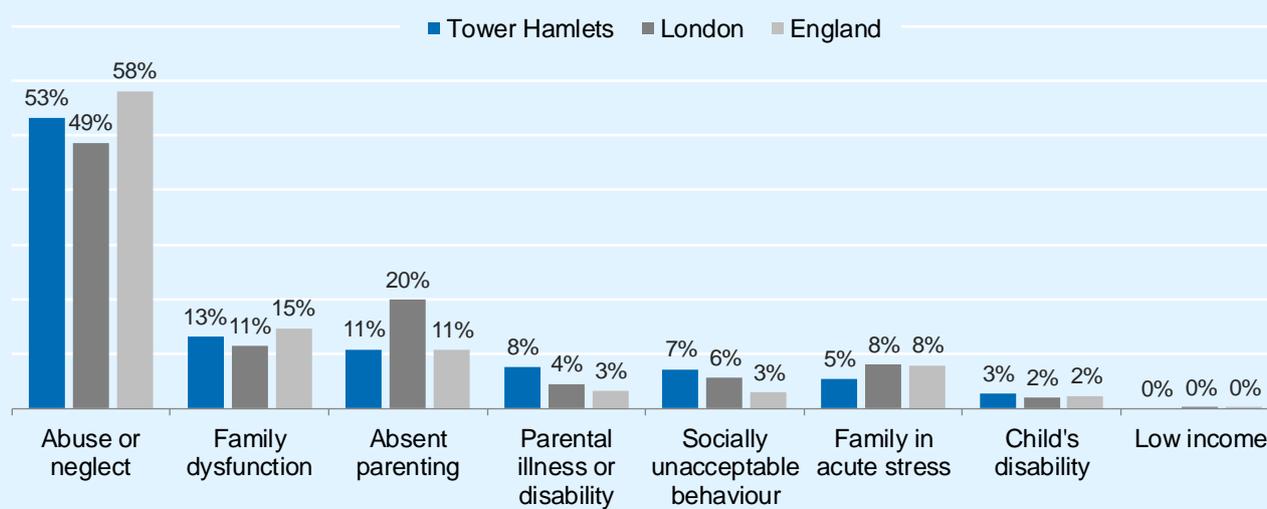
**Figure 9.5: Looked after children in Tower Hamlets as at 31 March 2017, by placement**



Source: Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017, underlying data tables.

The reasons for children in Tower Hamlets being looked after broadly mirror the trends in London and England, with the most common reason being abuse or neglect. Half (53 per cent) of children who started to be looked after in Tower Hamlets in 2016/17 were looked after because of abuse or neglect compared with 49 per cent in London and 58 per cent in England. However, Figure 9.6 shows that children in Tower Hamlets are less likely to be looked after due to absent parenting than in London as a whole (11 vs. 20 per cent) and are more likely to be looked after due to parental illness or disability (8 vs. 4 per cent).

**Figure 9.6: Children started to be looked after in 2016/17 by category of need**



Source: Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017, underlying data tables.

## Ofsted inspection of children's services

While the most recent published data on children's social care is from 2016/17, there have since been significant changes in Tower Hamlets following an Ofsted inspection in early 2017<sup>11</sup> which rated the council's children's services as inadequate overall.

Since the inspection, the council has taken immediate action to address the issues identified, and an independently chaired Improvement Board has been established to oversee progress. The council aims for children's services to achieve a rating of at least 'good' at the time of the next inspection, which is likely to be sometime in 2019.

More recent administrative data held by the council indicates that the number of Child Protection Plans is now falling – from 381 plans in March 2017 to 346 in February 2018.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the number of Looked After Children has fallen from 335 in March 2017 to 294 in February 2018.<sup>13</sup>

## Supporting Stronger Families programme

The national 'Troubled Families' programme was launched in 2012 with an aim to help families with multiple problems. In 2015, the government launched Phase 2 of the programme with an aim to turn around 400,000 families in England and Wales by 2020. Local authorities are responsible for identifying and working with families who have at least two of six problems:

1. Parents or children are involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
2. Children are not attending school regularly.
3. Children are identified as 'children in need' or are subject to a child protection plan.
4. Adults are out of work or at risk of financial exclusion; or young people are at risk of worklessness.
5. Families are affected by domestic violence or abuse.
6. Parents or children experience physical, mental health or substance misuse problems.

In Tower Hamlets, the programme is known as 'Supporting Stronger Families'. The council aims to identify and support 3,660 families who need help (based on the criteria above) by 2020. In January 2018, the council had successfully helped 'turn around' about 500 families, meaning that they had achieved a positive outcome such as finding work, or improving a child's school attendance.<sup>14</sup>

## Adult social care

Adult social care services support people who are disabled, ill, frail, elderly or vulnerable for another reason to live independently. There is a wide range of support provided by the council, including information and advice, activities and day centres, specialist housing, therapies and equipment to help with day-to-day tasks, support for people leaving hospital, and direct payments.

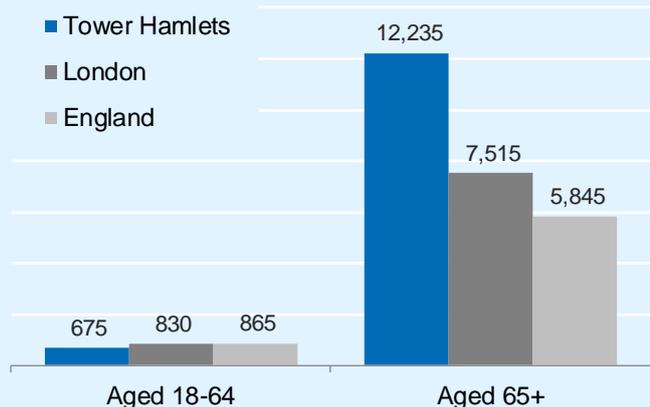
Tower Hamlets received 3,610 requests for support from new clients in 2016/17.<sup>15</sup> Six in ten of these requests (61 per cent) were from (or on behalf of) residents aged 65 and over, and 39 per cent were from (or on behalf of) residents aged 18 to 64. Of these requests, 15 per cent received short-term care, 18 per cent went on to receive ongoing low-level support, and 3 per cent received long-term care (the remaining were either signposted to universal services or were not eligible). These proportions are broadly in line with the rest of the country.

In 2016/17, 765 people received short-term reablement services to help them regain their independence after a period of ill health, 15 per cent of whom were aged 65 and over.<sup>16</sup> This equates to 4.2 per cent of older people leaving hospital receiving reablement support, compared with 3.7 per cent in London and 2.7 per cent in England.<sup>17</sup> 78 per cent of older people receiving reablement services remained

independent after 90 days, compared with 85.5 per cent in London and 82.5 in England.<sup>18</sup>

3,720 residents received long-term support from adult social care in 2016/17.<sup>19</sup> 40 per cent of these service users (or 1,485 residents) were aged 18 to 64 and 60 per cent (or 2,235 residents) were aged 65 and over.

**Figure 9.7: Rates of long-term adult social care users per 100,000 population, by broad age group, 2016/17**



Source: NHS Digital, *Adult Social Care Activity and Finance: England 2016-17 Reference Tables*. Table 28.

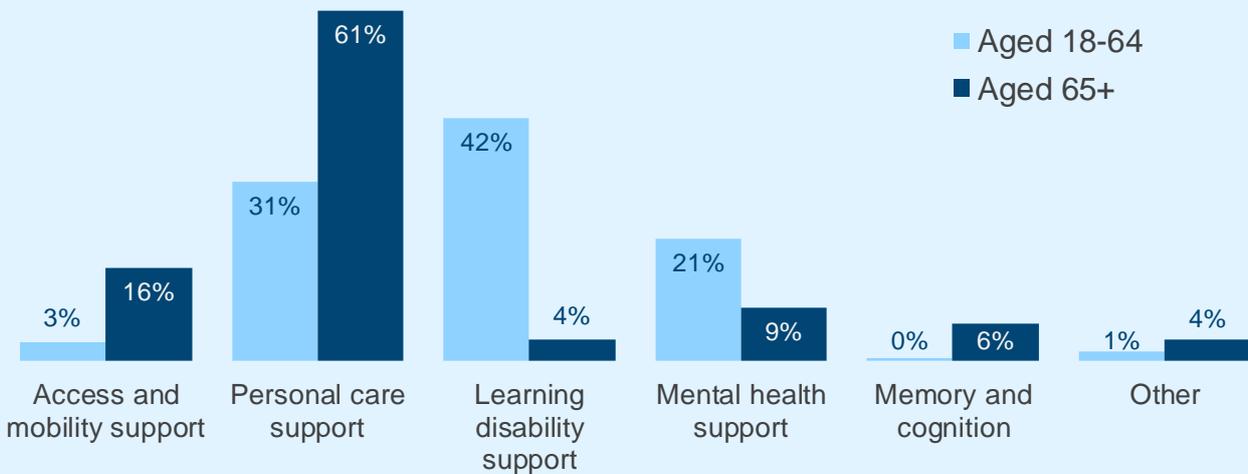
Expressed as a rate per 100,000 population, there are very large differences in social care use by age. [Figure 9.7](#) shows that for residents aged 18 to 64, there are 675 social care users per 100,000 population in Tower Hamlets which is lower than the rates in London (830) and England (865).

On the other hand, the rate for residents aged 65 and over is 12,235 social care users per 100,000 population – the highest rate in England out of 152 unitary and upper tier authorities. [Figure 9.7](#) shows that

this rate is more than twice the rate in England (5,845) and 1.6 times the rate in London (7,515). This reflects the fact that while Tower Hamlets has the lowest proportion of residents aged 65+ in the country<sup>20</sup>, the borough also has the highest rate of pensioner poverty, with half of older people living in income-deprived households<sup>21</sup>. (For more information, see the [Poverty](#) chapter.)

The needs of social care users also vary greatly by age. [Figure 9.8](#) shows that for residents aged 18 to 64, learning disability support is the most common primary need (42 per cent). For residents aged 65 and over, personal care support is by far the most common social care need (61 per cent).

**Figure 9.8: Long-term adult social care users by primary need, Tower Hamlets, 2016/17**



Source: NHS Digital, Adult Social Care Activity and Finance: England 2016-17 Reference Tables. Table 29. Figures relate to clients accessing Long Term support at the end 2016/17.

In a survey of adult social care users in the borough, 62 per cent say that they are satisfied with their care and support, similar to the proportions in London (59 per cent) and England (65 per cent).<sup>22</sup> 71 per cent of adult social care users in Tower Hamlets feel that they have control over their daily life, which is also similar to the proportion in London (73 per cent) and slightly lower than the proportion in England (78 per cent).<sup>23</sup>

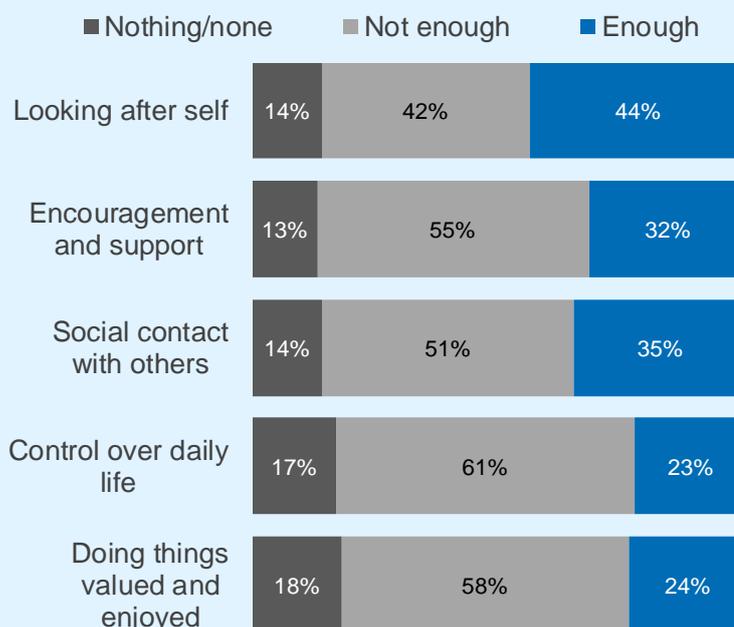
## Adult carers

A carer is a person who spends a significant portion of their time providing unpaid care and support to a partner, family member or friend. It is difficult to determine how many carers live in Tower Hamlets because quite often, people do not see themselves as 'carers' and do not access support services. In the 2011 Census, 19,356 residents said that they provided unpaid care to a family member, friend or neighbour because of illness, disability or problems relating to old age.<sup>24</sup>

Only a small proportion of these carers access support from adult social care. In 2016/17, 1,262 carers in the borough received information and advice from adult social care, 169 received Direct Payments to buy their own support and 93 benefitted from a respite break.<sup>25</sup> A survey of carers who received support from the council found that the majority (63 per cent) have been caring for more than five years and one in five (19 per cent) have been caring for 20 years or more.<sup>26</sup> Nearly half of these carers (47 per cent) report caring for 100 hours or more per week.<sup>27</sup>

Six in ten (61 per cent) carers in Tower Hamlets who access support from the council say that caring has a big impact on their life.<sup>28</sup> Figure 9.9 shows that carers report a low quality of life. A minority of carers who access support from the council say that they look after themselves enough (44 per cent), get enough encouragement and support (32 per cent), get enough social contact with others (35 per cent), have enough control over their daily life (23 per cent), and have enough time to do the things they value and enjoy (24 per cent). This is broadly in line with the quality of life reported by carers in the rest of the country.<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 9.9: Self-reported quality of life of adult carers, Tower Hamlets, 2016/17**

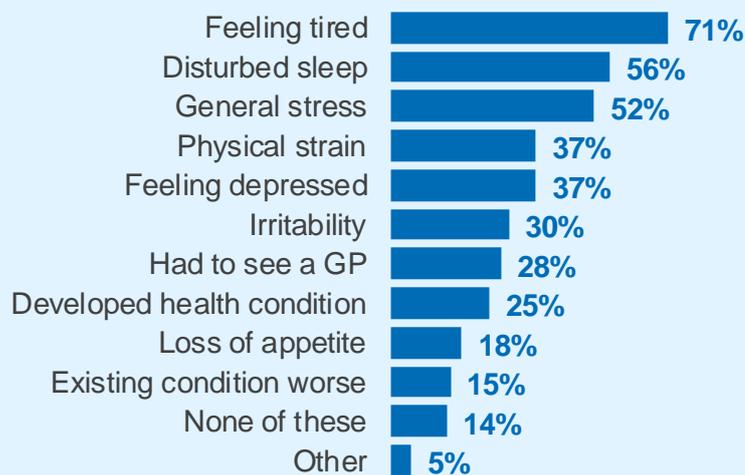


Source: Tower Hamlets Council, Survey of Adult Carers Survey Results 2016/17.

Carers report that their health is affected by their caring role in a variety of ways (see Figure 9.10). Only 14 per cent of carers said they did not experience any impact on their health, which is similar to the proportions in London (13 per cent) and England (10 per cent).<sup>30</sup>

17 per cent of adult carers in Tower Hamlets who accessed support say that caring has caused them 'a lot' of financial difficulty, which is higher than the proportions in London (12 per cent) and England (10 per cent).<sup>31</sup> A further 41 per cent of carers in the borough said they have financial difficulties 'to some extent', compared with 38 per cent in London and 36 per cent in England.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 9.10: Proportion of adult carers who report health issues caused by their caring role, Tower Hamlets, 2016/17**



Source: Tower Hamlets Council, Survey of Adult Carers Survey Results 2016/17.

## Future challenges

Adult social care is the council's biggest expenditure item, but local authorities across England are facing unprecedented pressures due to ageing populations and increasing care costs in the context of reduced funding to local government.

In Tower Hamlets, the population of residents aged 65 and over is expected to grow by 39 per cent over the next ten years, compared with 17 per cent growth of the working age population.<sup>33</sup> Borough residents also face the worst disability-free life expectancy in London. Men in Tower Hamlets have a disability-free life expectancy of 56.9 years compared with 63.8 years in London, and women in Tower Hamlets have a disability-free life expectancy of 56.4 years compared with 63.7 years in London.<sup>34</sup> (See the [Health](#) chapter for more information.)

In response to these pressures, our local health and social care organisations (including the council, Tower Hamlets CCG and Tower Hamlets CVS) are working in a more coordinated way to reduce duplication and improve outcomes for our residents. The council also introduced a new means-tested charging policy for home care and other adult social care services in October 2017, though our local scheme remains more generous than the policy in most other councils.



### Find out more

This report was produced by the council's Corporate Research Unit as part of the [Borough Profile 2018](#). For more in-depth analysis about Tower Hamlets, please visit the [Borough Statistics](#) page on the council's website or get in touch with the team at [cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

You can also find out more here:

- [The Local Account](#)
- [Characteristics of Carers in Tower Hamlets](#)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Department for Education, [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017 \(SFR61-2017\)](#). Table C5.
- <sup>2</sup> HM Revenue & Customs, [Children in low-income families local measure 2015](#).
- <sup>3</sup> HM Revenue & Customs, [Child & Working Tax Credit Statistics – Finalised annual awards 2015-16 \(geographical analysis\)](#) & [Child Benefit Statistics \(geographical analysis\) as at August 2015](#).
- <sup>4</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, [Local Account 2017/18](#)
- <sup>5</sup> NHS Digital, [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance: England 2016-17 Reference Tables](#). Table 25.
- <sup>6</sup> DCLG, [2015 Indices of Deprivation](#), Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index. The index measures the proportion of all those aged 60 or over who live in income deprived households (ie below the national poverty line).
- <sup>7</sup> Department for Education, [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017 \(SFR61-2017\)](#). Table B5.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Table D1.
- <sup>9</sup> Department for Education, [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017 \(SFR61-2017\)](#). Table D3.
- <sup>10</sup> Department for Education, [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017 \(SFR50/2017\)](#). Table LAA1.
- <sup>11</sup> Ofsted, April 2017. [Single inspection of Tower Hamlets children's services and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board](#).
- <sup>12</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, administrative data on Child Protection Plans.
- <sup>13</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, administrative data on Looked After Children.
- <sup>14</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, administrative data on Supporting Stronger Families.
- <sup>15</sup> NHS Digital, [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance: England 2016-17 Reference Tables](#). Table 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, [Local Account 2017/18](#)
- <sup>17</sup> NHS Digital, [Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework \(ASCOF\), England, 2016/17](#). Measure 2B(2).
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Measure 2B(1).
- <sup>19</sup> NHS Digital, [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance: England 2016-17 Reference Tables](#). Table 25, figure relates to the 'in year' total.
- <sup>20</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2016 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). Table MYE1.
- <sup>21</sup> DCLG, [2015 Indices of Deprivation](#), Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index. The index measures the proportion of all those aged 60 or over who live in income deprived households (ie below the national poverty line).
- <sup>22</sup> NHS Digital, [Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework \(ASCOF\), England, 2016/17](#). Measure 3A.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* Measure 1B.
- <sup>24</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census Table KS301EW via [NOMIS](#).
- <sup>25</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, [Local Account 2017/18](#)
- <sup>26</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, Survey of Adult Carers Results 2016/17.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> NHS Digital, [Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2016-17](#).
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> GLA, 2016-based housing led population projections via [London Datastore](#). Figures relate to projected growth between 2018 and 2028.
- <sup>34</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Healthy state life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by local areas, UK](#). Figures are for disability-free life expectancies at birth for 2014-2016.