

Families Matter

A magazine full of news and information to support families
Featuring the Let's Talk SEND Information Supplement

Celebrating Parent Volunteers



Fatima Kaggwa, parent volunteer at the Town Hall in Whitechapel.

Read all about the Parental Engagement Team's Volunteering in Your Child's School course, how parents from the course are developing their skills, pursuing careers in education and providing valuable support in Tower Hamlets schools – see pages 4-5.

Read the latest edition of the Families Matter magazine and monthly e-bulletin online at
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familiesmatter

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Welcome to the spring edition of Families Matter

This edition is packed with information and updates to inform and support parents and carers and to guide practitioners in their work with Tower Hamlets families.

We hope you find the Families Matter magazine useful and welcome your feedback and contributions. Please email us at parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk and tell us what else you would like to see in future editions.

Best wishes,
Parent and Family Support Service

Working with families?

Sign up to the Parental Engagement Team's network mailing list

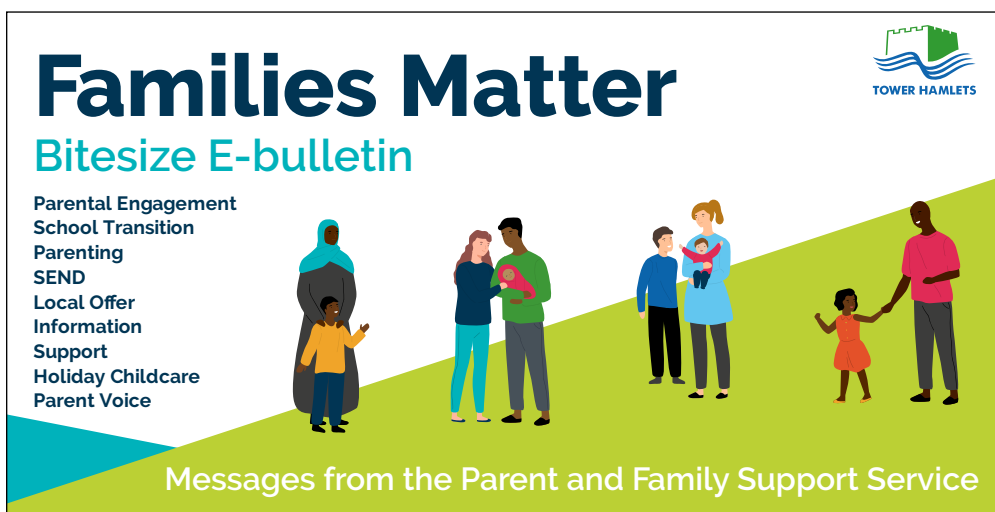
If you are working with families in the borough, sign up to the Parental Engagement Team's network mailing list to be emailed the latest news and information to support your work. Encourage your colleagues to sign up too.

Email: parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Families Matter: Bitesize E-bulletin

In addition to the regular termly Families Matter magazine, we publish a monthly e-bulletin. It provides regular updates, information, advice and support for all parents in Tower Hamlets.

Parents can sign up via the council's resident subscriber list, choosing 'children and education' as their preferred topic after closing the initial pop-up box and completing the one on the main webpage.



Visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/signup

This magazine is produced by the Parental Engagement Team within the Parent and Family Support Service, Children's Services Directorate. To share news in future editions of Families Matter contact

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References to 'parents' describes any caregiver responsible for the care, protection and upbringing of a child or young person, including foster parents or connected persons, grandparents, siblings or other family members living in Tower Hamlets.

References to 'SEND' is used in some articles as the abbreviation of special educational needs and disabilities.

Survey reveals high levels of parent satisfaction

Every year the Parental Engagement Team asks parents and carers who have accessed their services, courses or workshops to answer some questions about their experience and if they would recommend them to other parents.

Below are the results of the survey which took place in November 2023. They reveal that parents and carers had an overwhelmingly positive experience of using the services or attending courses or workshops.



97% agree or strongly agree

that accessing the service/course has helped me to understand my child's development and improve our relationship.



100% agree or strongly agree

that the service/course has increased my confidence and awareness which will support my own learning and development.



97% agree or strongly agree

that accessing the course/service has increased my knowledge and understanding and has enabled me to learn something new.



90% agree or strongly agree

that coming into the school or setting has improved my relationship with the staff.



88% agree or strongly agree

that the service/course has provided me with information and/or support which helps me in my role as parent.



91% agree or strongly agree

that the staff delivering the service/course were professional.



100% agree or strongly agree

that they would recommend the course/service to other parents/carers.



What parents have said

"This course has taught me so much."

"Really informative and beneficial."

"Found the course very helpful."

For more information on how the Parental Engagement Team can support your school or setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Volunteering in Your Child's School course

The Volunteering in Your Child's School course can be delivered either as a ten-week Open College Network (OCN) accredited course or as a five-week non-accredited introductory course.

Delivered by experienced practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, the course aims to prepare parents for their role as a volunteer by giving them an insight into teaching and learning in school.

Key topics include teaching and learning methods, the National and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, communication strategies, professionalism and safeguarding.

To find out more or to book the course for your school or setting, email

parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Parent volunteers pursue careers in education

Parents from the 2022 Volunteering in Your Child's School course at **Wellington Primary School** have been taking their passion for learning and working with children to the next level. Shanaz Begum and Nazrin Begum have both secured apprentice teaching assistant roles at the school and have their sights set on careers in teaching.

“

I wanted to develop my skills, so I joined the Volunteering in Your Child's School course. The course was an excellent opportunity for me to learn more about engaging and communicating with children. I also discovered how to support their learning and development.



The course boosted my confidence and I enjoyed having the chance to meet other volunteers like me. I learned so much that has helped prepare me for my current role as apprentice teaching assistant.

Working with children has always been a dream of mine. I want to keep learning and eventually pursue a career in teaching.

Shanaz Begum, parent

”

“

I really enjoyed the Volunteering in your Child's School course. I learned so much that has helped me secure my current job as an apprentice teaching assistant.



The course helped build my confidence and prepared me for the reality of working in the classroom.

While on the course, I became interested in the Early Years Foundation Stage and here I am today working in Wellington Primary School's nursery.

I have always wanted to work in a school as a teaching assistant and my aim is to pursue a teaching career some time in the future.

Nazrin Begum, parent

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Partnership with Icon College results in more volunteers for schools

As a result of the Parental Engagement Team's successful partnership with Icon College, another universal Volunteering in Your Child's School course was offered during the autumn term.

The course, which was delivered at the Parents Advice Centre, was open to all parents with

children in schools in Tower Hamlets. The parents completed the ten-week Open College Network accredited course in December and are now ready to start providing much needed volunteer support in local schools.



“

Thanks to Icon College and the Parental Engagement Team for giving me the confidence to support children's learning. The course has inspired me to encourage a positive relationship towards learning that will create a solid foundation for children as they go through school and life.

Fatima Kagawa, parent



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“

The partnership between the Parental Engagement Team and Icon College has meant there are now even more trained volunteers that have the specialist skills to provide much needed support to Tower Hamlets schools.

Nazia Ahmed, tutor
Volunteering in your Child's School course



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New parent volunteers for Marion Richardson

Parents from **Marion Richardson Primary School** have successfully completed the Volunteering in Your Child's School course. The Open College Network accredited course, which was delivered by the Parental Engagement Team in the autumn term, has been helping the parents prepare for their role as a volunteer by giving them valuable insights into teaching and learning at school.

“

The course has helped me understand more about volunteering in schools. I now feel more confident supporting children's learning in the classroom.

Luthfa Begum, parent



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“

The course has been amazing and helped me so much. I have gained more confidence and feel inspired to start volunteering.

Shalma Begum, parent



”



Parent from the sewing course with the tote bag she made

Sewing course at Swanlea and Old Palace

Parents from **Old Palace Primary School** and **Swanlea Secondary School** have been learning basic sewing techniques on an introductory course delivered by the Parental Engagement Team.

The course focuses on the fundamentals of using a sewing machine safely to create hems and seams.

Over the five-week course, the parents created their own lined tote bag with pockets. They also discovered some creative sewing hacks so that they could mend, alter or re-imagine old garments that they had brought in from home.

“

I now feel confident using a sewing machine.

Parent

”



Creative course helps with transfer to secondary school

Parents of Year 7 children from **Mulberry School for Girls** have been expressing themselves creatively on a specialist bag decoration course, developed by the Parental Engagement Team.

During the course, the parents developed their initial design ideas from rough sketches into intricate bag designs using a range of mixed media, including fabric paint and embroidery.

The course not only encourages parents to develop their creative skills, but also provides the school with a valuable way to engage with new parents as they navigate the transition from primary to secondary school.

“

The bag decoration workshop is a great success. For nearly ten years, it has helped the school engage with our Year 7 parents, understand their needs and support them as they transfer to secondary school.



Sabina Khan
Parent Liaison Officer
Mulberry School for Girls

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Sew and chat at Bow School

Parents from **Bow Secondary School** have been enjoying their weekly 'sew and chat' sessions. Over the past ten weeks, they have developed their creative skills, from producing hand-embroidered tote bags to more complex items such as the school banner.

Many of the parents found the sessions relaxing and therapeutic. They valued the opportunity to chat with others from the Bow Parent Ambassadors Forum, sharing ideas and contributing to the school community.

“

The course was really relaxing, but it also gave me an opportunity to network with other parents.

Parent

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For more details or to join Bow Parent Ambassadors Forum, email Fahmida Begum, Parental Engagement Team: fahmida.begum1@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Keeping Children Safe Online at Globe Primary

In a time of rapid digital advancements, the need to raise parents' awareness about online safety has never been more important. To meet the demand, the Parental Engagement Team have been successfully delivering Keeping Children Safe Online workshops in schools and colleges throughout the borough. The aim of the sessions is to empower parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape alongside their children.

The session at **Globe Primary School** provided a safe space for parents to share their concerns and insights regarding their children's online activities. Parents from the school really valued the opportunity to talk about the challenges they face – from managing screen time to addressing cyberbullying incidents.



Parents at the Keeping Children Safe Online session at Globe Primary School

For more details or to book a Keeping Children Safe Online session for your school or setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Celebrating parental engagement at Bow Secondary School

Bow Secondary School has been enjoying greater parental engagement in recent years. Parents have been busy fundraising, attending workshops and getting involved in the Parent Ambassadors Forum.

To celebrate the parents' achievements and the contributions to school life, Family Support Practitioner, Fahmida Begum, from the Parental Engagement Team, coordinated a special end of term trip to The Garden at 120, Spitalfields Market and Chaiwala where the parents enjoyed a celebratory brunch.

“

The trip was a great way for the parents to come together outside of school and to show our appreciation for their continuous support.



Fahmida Begum
Family Support Practitioner
Bow Secondary School

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Parents from Bow Secondary School enjoying the city skyline views at The Garden at 120 in Fenchurch Street

Emotional First Aid at Bow Secondary School

Parents from **Bow Secondary School** attended an Emotional First Aid course where they learned how to notice the signs of stress and identify things that can enhance their emotional wellbeing.

Over the six-week course, the parents shared their experiences and picked up some practical self-care tips which are the foundations to good mental health.

To find out more about the Emotional First Aid course or to book the course for your setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tower Hamlets Parent and Family Support Service

Parenting programmes

Parenting programmes are a source of support for all parents and offer an opportunity to share experiences, develop an understanding of child development, build positive relationships and learn to deal with challenging behaviour.

PROGRAMME	ELIGIBILITY	INFORMATION
Early Repair	All fathers and male carers	Early repair is a brief awareness two-day group programme for fathers identified as using abuse (physical and/or emotional and/or coercive control). It is for fathers who are assessed as being a lower risk in accordance with the Tower Hamlets risk matrix. Professional referrals only.
Emotional First Aid	All parents	Offers an overview of mental health and wellbeing in relation to parenting. Learn strategies to manage anxieties, identify stress factors, gain a better understanding of ourselves and promote a healthier sense of wellbeing.
Family Transitions	All parents	For parents who have experienced separation or divorce to learn how to co-parent effectively and to learn strategies for how to deal with the loss of their relationship with their ex-partner.
Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities	2-18 years	Aims to increase parental self-esteem and confidence and reduce child behavioural difficulties.
Speakeasy	5-18 years	For parents to develop the skills and confidence to talk to their children about growing up, relationships and keeping safe. Explores how relationship and sex education (RSE) is taught in schools and the influence on children from media and peers. Four weekly sessions.
Triple P for Baby	0-12 months	To prepare parents for a positive transition into parenthood and the first year with baby promoting sensitive and responsive care.
Triple P Group	2-11 years	For parents who wish to build positive relationships with their child, increase self-confidence and develop their skills and techniques for dealing with difficult behaviour.
Triple P Teen	12-18 years	For parents who wish to build positive relationships with their teens, increase self-confidence and develop their skills to communicate more effectively with their teens.

Triple P discussion groups

For parents of children aged 2-11 years

- Encouraging positive behaviour
- Managing fighting and aggression
- Developing good bedtime routines
- Hassle-free mealtimes with children

For parents of children aged 12-18 years

- Coping with teenagers' emotions
- Reducing family conflict
- Getting teenagers to co-operate
- Building teenagers' survival skills

Get in touch

Email: parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk Tel: 020 7364 6398

To book a place or to make a referral download a referral form, scan the QR code or visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes



Platform to Talk for the new year

Platform to Talk, the online discussion-based sessions, have launched a programme for the new year. The sessions, delivered by the Parental Engagement Team, provide a safe space for parents to come together, share their experiences and get reliable information. The new programme will cover a range of issues that matter to parents or relate to national awareness dates.

Supporting Children's Mental Health

**Tuesday 6 February
10-11am**

To coincide with Child Mental Health Week, this session explores ways you can talk to children about mental health. You will pick up some practical ideas on how to support your child's emotional wellbeing and help build their resilience.



Revise Wise

**Wednesday 20 March
10-11am**

Revision is key to making learning stick, yet many students don't know how to do it well. Join this session to discover how to support students develop good learning. You will find out about the most effective revision methods to ensure students can perform at their best during exams.



Supporting Students Through Exams

**Thursday 18 April
10-11am**

Students need to feel well to perform at their best during exams. In this session you will discover ways to help boost their wellbeing and manage the stress of exams. You will pick up some tried and tested exam techniques that could make all the difference to their grades.



Self-care for Mental Health

**Friday 17 May
10-11am**

This special Mental Health Awareness Week session will help you understand your own emotional needs so that you can develop positive emotional health. You will have the chance to share your experiences with other parents and pick up some practical self-care tips.



Growing up and Change

**Wednesday 12 June
10-11am**

Join this session to discover how to talk to children about growing up, the changes happening in their bodies and relationships. You will get an insight into the pressures children face and pick up some important tips to help keep them safe.



Good Start at Secondary School

**Friday 12 July
10-11am**

Help your child get off to the best possible start at secondary school by attending this informative session. You will learn how to help your child manage any anxiety they may be feeling about their new school and pick up some practical tips.



Government minister visit to John Smith Family Hub

Dame Andrea Leadsom, Minister for Public Health, Start for Life and Primary Care, was welcomed to the John Smith Family Hub in November 2023, to discuss Tower Hamlets Council's involvement in the government's Start for Life Workforce Development programme pilot.

The programme, funded by the Department of Health and Social Care, offers five local authorities a share of £10 million over two years to explore ways to give babies the best start in life.

Tower Hamlets is one of the pilot boroughs for the scheme, as well as being one of the first 75 local authorities to roll out the Family Hubs programme – a new way of bringing together all the support a family may need.

Under the new Family Hub model, local services work together to provide joined-up support. This ensures that children, young people and families get the right help at the right time.



Dame Andrea Leadsom (front left) visiting the John Smith Family Hub

The programme has now launched in one of four localities in the borough, with the network in the South East of the borough due to launch on 15 February 2024 at Isle of Dogs Family Hub.

Find out more [here](#) or scan the QR code.



“

I was delighted to visit Tower Hamlets Family Hub – it was great to hear about their Start for Life workforce pilot that will meet local needs.

Dame Andrea Leadsom

”

What are Family Hubs?

Family Hubs are a new way of bringing together all the support a family may need, from pregnancy through to young people turning 19 (or 25 if they have SEND).

The vision in Tower Hamlets is for Family Hubs to operate as a network of services which includes health, education, housing, council and the voluntary sector.

These services will work together to provide high quality, whole-family, joined up support, ensuring that children, young people and families get the right help at the right time.

www.thfamilyhubs.co.uk





Angela Whittle and Hussein Hussein from the Parental Engagement Team attending the Black History celebration

Family Hubs celebrate Black History

Tower Hamlets Family Hubs organised an event for professionals and families to come together to celebrate the richness and significance of Black History.

The event, at **Mile End Children and Family Centre**, took place in October as part of Black History Month. It featured inspiring displays that highlighted key figures in Black History and how they have helped shape our world.

Barrister Ife Thompson, who has a background in international human rights and Black History research, was the guest speaker at the event. She spoke about the impact of Black History in the UK and the importance of diversity in Tower Hamlets.

New Triple P for Baby parenting programme

A new Triple P parenting programme, Triple P for Baby, has recently been launched. The programme is for parents-to-be or new parents with a baby up to 12 months.

The eight-week programme helps parents adjust to life with their new baby, build a close relationship with them and support their development.

Programme structure

- Four classroom-based group sessions with other new parents
- Plus four individual consultations with a trained practitioner to reflect on progress

Programme content

- Creating the best environment for new babies
- Responding to babies' cues
- Handling crying and comforting babies
- Promoting good sleep habits for babies
- Helping babies learn and develop
- Self-care for new parents



For more details and to secure a place on the next course, email PAE@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Practitioners ready to deliver new parenting programme



Practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team have been accredited to deliver the new Triple P for Baby parenting programme. The practitioners attended an intensive three-day training course to familiarise themselves with the content of the programme that focuses on parents-to-be or new parents with a baby up to 12 months.

The team have already been delivering Triple P parenting programmes for parents of older children. They were pleased to be offered the opportunity to be trained in an additional parenting programme that specialises in babies to help parents support their baby's learning and development at this crucial stage.

The practitioners are looking forward to delivering the new Triple P for Baby programme in Family Hubs, Children and Family Centres and community venues across the borough

To find out more, email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Triple P at St John's CE Primary School

Practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team delivered a successful Triple P parenting programme at **St John's Church of England Primary School** in Bethnal Green.

The programme, for parents with children aged two to 11 years, was delivered to a diverse group, including parents of children with special educational needs and parents of children with challenging behaviour.

The parents valued the opportunity to share their experiences with each other and receive support from the



Parents receiving their certificates on completion of the Triple P parenting programme

Triple P facilitators from the Parental Engagement Team. The achievements of the nine parents who completed the

programme were celebrated in a special end of course party where they were awarded their certificates.

To find out more about the range of Triple P parenting programmes, email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Parents from the SFSC parenting course at the Parent Advice Centre

Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC)

SFSC is a parenting programme for parents of children aged two to 18 years.

It covers a range of topics including behaviour and anger management, enhancing relationships and promoting healthy, violence-free lifestyles.

A group of parents recently completed the 13-week programme, which was delivered in Bengali. They enjoyed discovering different approaches to parenting and benefited from trying out some of the strategies they were introduced to on the course.

“

The course helped me bond more with my family. I feel more empathy for them by spending special time with them.

Parent

”

For more information about the SFSC parenting programme, email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Children and Families Safeguarding Services merge

The Early Help Hub and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) have merged to create one integrated team – the Multi-Agency Support Team.

This newly formed team of professionals will be responsible for all aspects of safeguarding children and family support in Tower Hamlets.

The merger has happened in response to the recommendations from the Greater London Authority peer review that took place in 2022. The team will ensure that children, young

people and their families receive the right service at the right time, preventing confusion and making it easier to access services.

The team is now operating from the Town Hall in Whitechapel and a new pathway for referrals has been developed.

The new single pathway has replaced the two previous pathways for the Early Help Hub and MASH. It will ensure a more joined-up approach between services.

Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children's Partnership: New Working Together 2023 changes

In December 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) published a new edition of its statutory guidance on working together to safeguard children.

This 2023 edition replaces working together to safeguard children 2018.

The guidance outlines what organisations and agencies must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 years old in England.

The 2023 edition includes updates around:

- Multi-agency expectations for all practitioners
- Working with parents and families
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners
- The role of education and childcare providers
- Multi-agency practice standards
- Support for children with disabilities
- Tackling harm that occurs outside the home



For full guidance, click [here](#).

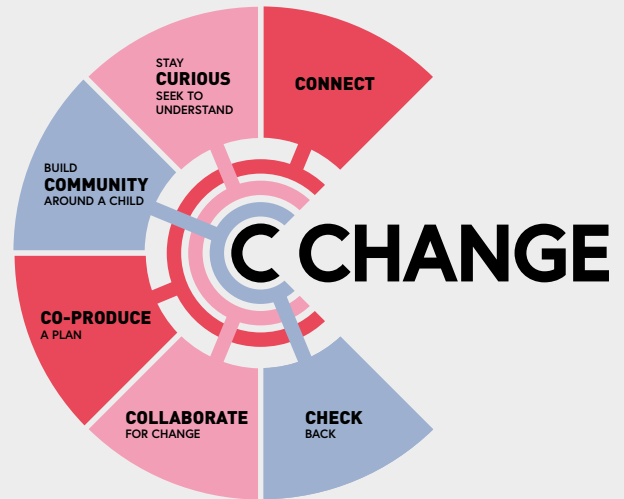


Summary of changes, click [here](#).



NSPCC briefing, click [here](#).

For more information, email THSCP@towerhamlets.gov.uk



The Better Together framework

In 2022, the Supporting Families Division (Early Help, Youth Justice and Young People's Service and Children's Social Care) launched the Better Together framework.

This sets out how children, young people, their carers and people involved in the network of support can work together effectively. It is based on restorative practice, systemic and trauma-informed approaches.

The framework's C-Change approach:

- **Connect**
- Be **Curious**
- Build a **Community** around the child
- **Co-produce** plans with those affected by them
- **Collaborate** to bring about change
- **Check** back to see if it's making a difference

The framework's commitments

- Be open and honest
- Listen to understand
- Value families' experiences
- Work to prevent harm and repair damage
- Empower people with support

To book a Better Together training session, visit learninghub.towerhamlets.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=716 or email learning.hub@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Reducing Parental Conflict for practitioners

The Reducing Parental Conflict programme aligns with the domestic abuse strategy but focuses on conflict below the threshold of domestic abuse. It aims to reduce conflict early and to help parents understand how conflict can affect children.

The Reducing Parental Conflict Team are available to support schools and practitioners. They can attend team meetings, learning and networking events to explain more about the work they do and the resources available to help reduce parental conflict. They can facilitate presentations and short training sessions – either standalone workshops or incorporated into themed events. These can be delivered either online or in-person.

For further details, email earlyhelp@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Resources available at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/rpc

Supporting Muslim parents with difficult conversations

The NSPCC and Approachable Parenting have produced a guide to support Muslim families. The guide aims to help keep children safe by making difficult conversations feel more comfortable.

Whether it's talking about puberty, relationships, boundaries or something else, some topics can feel difficult to talk about with children. This toolkit helps parents feel more comfortable having these kinds of conversations in an Islamic context.



<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/uncomfortable-conversations>



Arguing Better

Arguing Better is an online course to help parents understand the impact arguing has on children.

The course was created by relationship experts from OnePlusOne to help parents to communicate in ways that are helpful rather than harmful. It is free for Tower Hamlets residents.

Getting it Right for Children

When parents separate, it's easy for children to get caught in the middle of their arguments and disagreements. Getting it Right for Children is a free online course available to Tower Hamlets parents. It has been designed to help separated parents to co-operate so they can get it right for their children.

For more details, visit www.oneplusone.org.uk/parents

Early Help Family Group Conferences



A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a meeting where families and their friends are supported to get together to make plans for their child(ren). The conference can help families through difficult times, such as when parents are ill, struggling to meet their children's needs or worried about their child's behaviour and wellbeing.

The aim of the conference is to get a good plan in place and provide early help support so that parents can cope better and children feel supported by the family.

The FGC meeting is coordinated by an independent person called a Family Group Conference coordinator. The coordinator will ensure that parents are fully consulted about when and where the conference takes place as well as which family members and friends should attend.

The three parts of a Family Group Conference

Information giver

Usually someone who already works with the child will attend

to talk about their involvement. They will explain what support may be available. This person is called the information giver.

Parents will have a chance to ask questions and gain a better understanding of what they need to consider when making the plan. The plan can then be created in the private time session.

Private time

The family will then be left in private to discuss and put together a family plan.

It is important that everyone has a chance to express their ideas and offer what support they can for the child. The coordinator is on standby to help if needed.

Presenting the plan

Once the plan is made, it is presented to the FGC coordinator. Any requests for additional support or resources can be discussed at this point.

A date is set for a FGC review and the coordinator sends the plan to everyone who attended the conference.

Future coordinator role for Muna

Somali Parents and Carers Network Forum member, Muna, has successfully gained a place on a Family Group Conference Coordinator course.

The course prepares students for the role of coordinator as well as covers related issues such as child protection, inclusion and domestic violence awareness. Muna hopes to take up a role as a Family Group Conference Coordinator when she completes the course in June.

To find out about future Family Group Conference Coordinator courses, email

family.groupconference@towerhamlets.gov.uk



For more information on the Somali Parents and Carers Network click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Muna is looking forward to supporting families following her recent training

To make a referral for a Family Group Conference, email family.groupconference@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Working with Families seminar

A multi-agency seminar took place in November at the Town Hall in Whitechapel. Organised by the Parental Engagement Team, the event was an opportunity for practitioners to network, meet colleagues and partners from different sectors and find out about resources available to support their work with families.

The seminar included:

- An update on the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/HAF
- An interactive overview of the new Lumi Nova app – the digital game to help children manage their worries and reduce symptoms of anxiety.
www.luminova.app and see page 20
- Information on the borough's Reducing Parental Conflict programme of support for families
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/RPC and see page 16
- Information about a new research project on children's eating habits conducted by Queen Mary University of London
Email: s.pombo@qmul.ac.uk and see page 21
- Details about relevant parenting programmes, courses and workshops delivered by the Parental Engagement Team
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes and see page 9



Sonia Pombo from Queen Mary University of London sharing information with colleagues on the children's food survey research project.



Anna Beattie from Harry Gosling Primary School networking with Rumana Begum from Marion Richardson Primary School at the Working with Families seminar

To find out about future Working with Families seminars, email
parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Ministry of Food at the Holiday Childcare Scheme

Children from the Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme have been discovering how cooking together with friends can be fun and is good for your health. They took part in a special one-off cooking session called 'Ministry of Food' during the October half-term at St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School.

The Ministry of Food session, devised by Jamie Oliver and delivered by specially trained practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, emphasises the benefits of preparing your own meals from scratch using fresh ingredients.

The children were introduced to new ingredients and learned some professional knife skills which they used to chop vegetables, meat and herbs.

They made tasty Mexican-inspired chicken fajitas, which they enjoyed eating for their lunch.



Mohammed from the Holiday Childcare Scheme at the Ministry of Food workshop during October half-term

Ministry of Food at Central Foundation School for Girls

Parents from **Central Foundation School for Girls** have been developing their cooking skills on the Ministry of Food course.

The course introduced parents to new ingredients and cooking methods while exploring portion size, mindful eating and cooking from scratch using fresh ingredients.

Healthy eating principles were a key feature of the course – the parents were supported as they made small but significant changes to improve the health of their family.

They enjoyed working together to create flavoursome and healthy dishes from around the world that were low in sugar, salt and fat.

“

The course has changed how I shop and cook for my family. I use more fresh ingredients in my cooking now.

Ministry of Food participant

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To find out more about Ministry of Food or to book a course for your setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Healthy Families dental health sessions

Dental health sessions offered by Healthy Families practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team explore the features of good dental health routines helping parents and children to integrate these into their daily life.

Through discussion, fun activities and sharing the most up-to-date research, practitioners support parents to make small but significant changes that can really improve the oral health of their family.

During the sessions, families discover the impact of particular foods and drink on teeth and pick up some useful tips on how to improve their dental health.

Parents have said that they enjoy the interactive nature of the workshops, for example, working together with their child to practise the most effective brushing technique.

For more information on good dental health routines for children, click [here](#).



For more details and to book a Healthy Families dental health session for your setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

App to help children manage their worries

The Lumi Nova app has been devised to support children aged seven to 12 years who are experiencing worries or anxiety.

Lumi Nova is an adventure game that helps young people to face fears and manage their worries. While exploring planets, customising characters and earning treasure, children break their fears down into manageable steps. They learn skills that help them to build resilience.

The app may be useful for children who lack the confidence to try new things, struggle to face challenges or have negative thoughts about the future.

To find out more, attend one of the upcoming information sessions.



Discovery sessions for parents – click [here](#) or scan QR code



Discovery sessions for professionals – click [here](#) or scan QR code

For more information visit www.luminova.app

Schools and professionals are invited to order promotional resources, including flyers and posters, to share with families and to set up test accounts to try the app. Email luminova@bfb-labs.com

Platform to Talk session to coincide with Children's Mental Health Week

Children's Mental Health Week is 5-11 February. This year's theme is 'My Voice Matters'. It's all about empowering children and young people to use their voice, share what matters to them, and encourage those around them to hear their voice.

Free resources for schools [here](#).
Free resources for families [here](#).

Platform to Talk session

The Parental Engagement Team are holding a special Platform to Talk session to coincide with Children's Mental Health Week.

The Supporting Children's Mental Health session will explore ways parents can talk to their child about mental health and support their child's emotional wellbeing.

Tuesday 6 February

10am-11am

Delivered online through Zoom

For more details or to book your place, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Building Connections

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) have launched an initiative for young people who are experiencing loneliness. The aim is to empower young people to build strong foundations and find ways to overcome loneliness.

Building Connections is an online service for young people up to the age of 19 where a befriender guides and champions them. With this support, it is hoped that young people can develop the confidence to build strong connections and prevent loneliness. Click [here](#) for more information.

Children's online food survey

Parents and carers of healthy children aged three to 11 and living in Tower Hamlets are being invited to take part in an online children's food survey. The survey is being conducted by Queen Mary University of London. The results will be used to better understand the diet and eating habits of children.

How to take part in the survey

- Keep a record of all food and drink the child has eaten in a day
- This will be done online, on four different days.

Parents will receive a £15 gift card for completing the survey.

For more information, email s.pombo@qmul.ac.uk or click [here](#).

Young people's right to access healthcare

Youth organisation, Spotlight, has a webpage dedicated to young people's (11 years and over) right to access healthcare, including attending appointments on their own if that is what they want and having the same rights to confidentiality as adults. There is also an easy-to-read leaflet for young people.

www.wearespotlight.com/your-rights

Early Years childcare funding rollout for working parents

Childcare support is expanding. There are significant changes coming to 15 and 30 hours childcare support in England. The government have announced new funding available for working parents, which starts from April 2024.

The expansion includes free paid for hours for two, three and four-year-olds to begin with, and eventually spanning to babies from nine months old.

The dates for each phase:

- From April 2024, eligible* working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours per week from the term after their child's second birthday
- From September 2024, eligible* working parents of children aged nine months up to three years will be able to access 15 hours per week (from the term after their eligible birthday).
- From September 2025, eligible* working parents of children aged nine months up to three years will be able to access 30 hours per week (from the term after their eligible birthday).

*To access the extended hours, the present eligibility criteria requires parents to be working more than 16 hours a week at National Minimum Wage and be earning less than £100,000.

Depending on the childcare provider, these hours can be used over 38 weeks of the year or up to 52 weeks if parents use fewer than their total hours per week.

For more information and to subscribe for updates on how/when to apply and check your eligibility, visit

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/upcoming-changes-to-childcare-support



Thinking of becoming a childminder?

Have you ever thought of becoming a childminder? Childminding could be the career for you if you:

- Love working with children in your own home
- Can be flexible and adaptable
- Would like to run your own business
- Are committed to providing good quality childcare

To find out more, attend an upcoming information session where you will find out about the process of becoming a registered childminder.

To book your place on a childminder's information session, email
EECTraining@towerhamlets.gov.uk

TOWER HAMLETS

Holiday Childcare Scheme

Ages 3-13 years old

The Tower Hamlets Childcare Scheme offers Ofsted registered childcare.

020 7364 0523
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs



Learning through play at Old Palace

Parents from **Old Palace Primary School** attended a three-week workshop focusing on the idea of learning through play. With a strong emphasis on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, the workshop inspired parents with

play-based ideas to support their child's learning and development.

- Week one looked at the importance of play in early childhood and explored the key principles of the EYFS curriculum.

- Week two provided some practical examples of how play can be integrated into everyday routines.
- Week three explored how the resources could be used to continue to support their child's learning at home.

To book a Learning through Play course for your school or setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Winter of play for families in need

The Parental Engagement Team have been working closely with Save the Children to ensure that families in need were supported and children were able to enjoy a winter of play during the festive season.

Save the Children put together play packs to ensure that children could play, learn and explore over the holiday period. The packs featured items such as drawing materials, board games and fleece blankets

that helped create a cosy home environment, enhance play and support creativity.

The packs were distributed to local families who were struggling during the current cost of living crisis.

Family support practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team ensured that the families got the packs in time for Christmas so that they could enjoy a winter of play.

“

Many families are struggling, particularly in the lead up to Christmas. These packs provided much needed additional support at a difficult time.

Rashina Begum
Family Support Practitioner

”



Let's Talk SEND Updates and Information

Information on previous and upcoming Let's Talk SEND events and updates on the borough's SEND improvement journey can be found at

www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/let-s-talk-send



Upcoming events

SEND provider information day

SEND education providers will showcase their offers for SEND learners at the Careers and Social Mobility Team's event at the Ecology Pavilion on Thursday 7 March.

This event will help SEND young people and their parents find out more about their next best steps and the different options available to them.

Open to young people, parents and SENDCOs.

Thursday 7 March

10am-2pm

Ecology Pavilion

Mile End Park

Grove Road, E3 5RP

For more information, email

careersandsocialmobility@towerhamlets.gov.uk

TERMS

SENCOs are also referred to as SENDCOs (Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinators) in some schools.

SENDIASS refers to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service.

Parents – references to 'parents' describes any caregiver responsible for the care, protection and upbringing of a child or young person, including foster parents or connected persons, grandparents, siblings or other family members living in Tower Hamlets.

Let's Talk SEND transition event

Parents of children in Years 4 and 5 with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are invited to attend a Let's Talk SEND transition event to support their children with the secondary school transfer process. There will be a presentation from the SEN department on secondary transfer and information on independent travel training, plus the opportunity to meet with secondary school SENDCOs.

The Family Information Service will also be on hand to provide information on services to support families and what is available through the Local Offer website.

Wednesday 24 April

9.30am-2pm

Brady Arts and Community Centre

192-196 Hanbury Street, E1 5HU

Lunch will be provided. For more information or to book your place:

Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tel: **020 7364 6489**

Let us know what you would like to see in the next termly Let's Talk SEND supplement.

Email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

More information on the support available to families can be found at www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com

Inclusion framework document

Tower Hamlets Council continues its partnership with the Council for Disabled Children and key stakeholders across education, health, and social care to co-produce a Tower Hamlets Ordinarily Available Provision document or Inclusion Framework.

The aim of this initiative is to co-produce a document that sets out what must be made available for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities attending mainstream school settings.

The document will help schools to reflect on how their inclusive practice and early intervention benefits all children and young people, including those with SEND.

It will outline a set of expectations to help improve consistency and practice across all settings so that the needs of children and young people with SEND are met. In addition, the document provides useful signposting to key services, guidance and training to support schools become more inclusive.

A series of working groups have taken place with stakeholders across education, health and social care. The experiences and voices of children and young people have been captured by SENDCO partners and initial parent and carer discussions have begun.

For more details and to get involved, email lindsey.kelly@towerhamlets.gov.uk



ARE YOU A YOUNG PERSON AGED BETWEEN 11 TO 25 WITH SEND?

Join us at a brand-new series of sessions, dedicated to young people with mild to moderate levels of SEND.

These sessions aim to support SEND young people with their development, including physical, social, and emotional skills and raise their self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence.

There are also a range of activities available including, sports, fitness studio, homework club, health, wellbeing, employability and more.

WHERE?

Haileybury Youth Centre:
Ben Jonson Rd London E1 3FQ

WHEN?

Every Tuesday, starting on 9 January 2024, from 6.30pm to 9pm

There is no need to book, you can just turn up.



This is your chance to meet and socialise with other young people from your area, so don't miss out. Scan the QR code to find out more!

Contact

Team Manager, Gary Treasure: **07745 745 660**
Or email: YTH_London@towerhamlets.gov.uk

For a suitability assessment, please contact Iqbal on: **07961483199**

Follow us on Instagram and X: [@YTH_London](https://www.instagram.com/YTH_London)

Let's Talk SEND: Overview of autumn 2023 events

Let's Talk SEND Year 9 event

The Year 9 Let's Talk SEND event in December was attended by over 45 people including young people, their parents and carers. The event provided information and guidance from Young Workpath, Family Hubs and Barnardo's support stalls.



Abzal Ali, Deputy Head of Tower Hamlets Young People's Service, speaking at the Year 9 event



Our Time All Ability Youth Forum

Preparing for Adulthood Team

The event began with an introduction to Preparing for Adulthood and a presentation on the importance of the Year 9 Annual Review. It explored how young people could be supported as they prepare for adulthood and independent living.

Attendees also shared their views on the issues that are important to them. They felt reassured that schools and the council will ensure that all plans for transition will have high aspirations that will prepare young people for bright futures.

Contact: jenny.quiller@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Youth Service provision

This was followed by the Young Tower Hamlets service who introduced the new SEND Pilot Youth Session. This is planned to start early 2024 at the Haileybury Centre and will be specifically for young people with SEND.

See the flyer on these new sessions on page 25.

Contact: YTH_London@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Young Workpath

The third presentation at the event was delivered by career specialists from Young Workpath. This service offers information, advice, and guidance to young people between the ages of 13 and 25.

Although careers advice is provided to young people in school, parents were encouraged to contact one of the specialist careers advisors if their young person needed additional support or help achieving their career goals.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/youngworkpath

Our Time All Ability Youth Forum

Two members of Our Time gave an update on their work achievements. Our Time is a youth forum run for and by young people between the ages of 14 and 25 with SEND. They are the voice of young people in the borough and work hard to raise awareness about the challenges many young people with SEND face. They play a key role in supporting the council to improve the SEN offer for children and young people in Tower Hamlets. Young people at the event were invited to join the forum.

www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/organisations/23749-our-time-youth-forum

Hearing from a young person's journey to employment

Shakil closed the event with a description of his programme, the support he receives at work and the impact his programme has had on his life. Shakil is currently employed as an apprentice with Tower Hamlets Council and is based at the New Town Hall in Whitechapel.

Shakil started his 15-month SEND Apprenticeship within the Commissioning Service in February 2023 and is already known for his excellent work and presentation skills.

All young people on the TH SEND apprenticeships have an opportunity to achieve a qualification, gain valuable experience and skills and earn a wage. He will also receive a qualification at the end of the apprenticeship. SEND apprenticeships are new to the



Shakil is currently employed as an apprentice

local authority but plans are being made to offer more SEND apprenticeships in March 2024 and beyond.

A big thank you to all parents and carers that attended the event – the feedback they gave will support the borough's SEND improvement journey.

Let's Talk SEND information event

Parents and carers attended a Let's Talk SEND information event in November. The event, held at the Brady Arts and Community Centre, featured stalls and updates from services that support children with SEND or an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Co-produced with the Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum, the event provided parents and carers with valuable updates on the borough's SEND improvement journey and their plans for the future.

Parents and carers also had a chance to meet a whole range of education, health and community service providers.

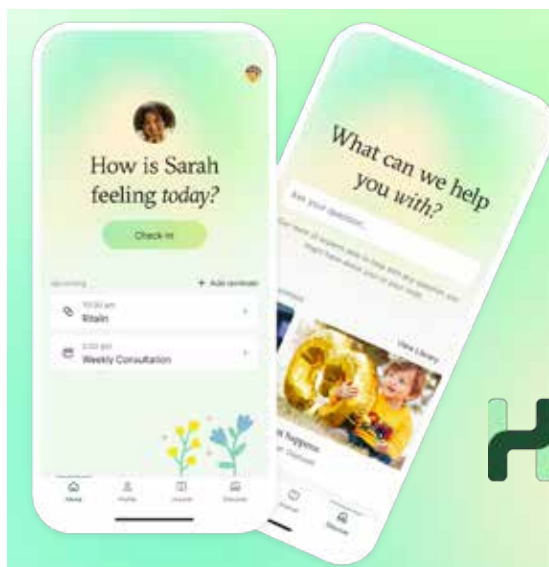


To find out about future Let's Talk SEND events,
email towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Hibi app helps parents feel in control of child's care

Behind every child with health conditions, there is a family at home working to navigate their care. Parents must manage, store and share huge amounts of information, as well as navigate a system that is split across health, education and social care. This can be overwhelming for many families.

Hibi is a free app for families of children with developmental differences and health conditions. It provides access to care management tools, allowing families to track symptoms, set up medication reminders, share information and analyse trends.



Hibi is an app providing families access to care management tools and expert guidance.

Download & try for free today.

 Hibi



It was designed in consultation with families and care professionals across the UK, including the Tower Hamlets

Independent SEND Parent Forum. It is hoped that with the app, parents will feel more in control of their child's care.

For more details, visit <https://hibi.health>

Tower Hamlets Local Offer focus group

Parents are invited to join a focus group discussion about the Local Offer website on **Monday 26 February, 10-11.30am** at the Parent Advice Centre, 30 Greatorex Street, E1 5NP. The website provides information and advice to families with children aged from birth to 25. For further information and to book your place, call 020 7364 6495 or email localoffer@towerhamlets.gov.uk.
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/localoffer



SEND Support Group

- Come and meet other parents
- Share information
- Younger children welcome
- Monthly guest speakers
- No diagnosis needed

For more information contact:
Tower Hamlets & City SEND IASS, 30 Greatorex Street, Whitechapel, London E1 5NP
☎ 020 7364 6489
✉ TowerHamlets&City.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk
🐦 @TH_IASS
🌐 www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com

We meet fortnightly, Thursday, Term time only
10am-12noon
at Tower Hamlets & City SEND IASS



Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum

The Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum is pan-disability. Members work with families and professionals from the council and health services to ensure the views of parents, carers and young people contribute to the design and delivery of services.



Join other parents and carers of children and young people with SEND (0-25 years) for coffee and talk about the issues that are important to you.

For more information, email thesendforum@gmail.com
call 07498 573872
www.thesendforum.co.uk



New Young Mayor for Tower Hamlets

Young people have voted to elect 16-year-old Fetuma Hassan from Mulberry School for Girls as their new Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets.

Fetuma will be the voice of young people in the borough – she will work closely with other young people and services to understand their issues.

The role will include getting involved in the Tower Hamlets Youth Council and influencing strategic decisions that affect young people. Fetuma is looking forward to contributing to creating a thriving Tower Hamlets where young people can flourish.

“

I look forward to a journey of collaboration, dedicated to the progress of our borough, towards a transparent, inclusive and thriving Tower Hamlets.

Fetuma Hassan
Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets

”



For more details, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.

Dads' event builds a supportive community

The **Ocean Children and Family Centre** in Stepney hosted a special Dads' Network event with the Parental Engagement Team in December. The event was part of the South West Family Hub locality's regular Saturday dads' group.

The event brought together fathers and male caregivers for a day of connection, creating a space where they could share experiences and build a supportive community.

Children engaged with a range of activities provided by the centre – from creative crafts to dinosaurs and building blocks, the children enjoyed exploring a stimulating environment that encouraged their imagination and social development.

Meanwhile, dads and male carers took the opportunity to forge connections with one another. Conversations flowed as they exchanged parenting tips, personal anecdotes and useful advice. The event not only fostered a sense of community among fathers but also emphasised the key role they play in their children's lives.



To find out about future Dads' Network events or to join the network email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The Ocean Children and Family Centre host a dads group and play session for dads and male carers to attend with their children.

Every Saturday, 10am–11.30am
Ocean Children and Family Centre,
Whitehorse Road, E1 0ND

For more information, call 020 7364 6605.



Creative research and development programme for young people with A Team Arts Education

The 'Explore' Research and Development programme takes place during spring half-term and will explore artist practise. It will involve visits to studios, exhibitions and feature workshops that focus on traditional skills.

Organised by A Team Arts Education, the programme is supported by Alexander McQueen and Central Saint Martin's Knowledge Exchange Team.

This is a great opportunity for anyone interested in a career in fashion, textiles or design to learn more about opportunities in the creative sector. Young people will be able to access support with course work and portfolio development.

- Induction session
**Saturday 10 February
11am-3.30pm**
- Research and Development programme
**Tuesday 13, Wednesday 14
and Thursday 15 February
11am-4pm**

The sessions will be delivered at the Brady Arts and Community Centre in Whitechapel.

The free programme is open to young people aged 11-18 years (up to 25 for those with SEND) who live, work or study in Tower Hamlets.

All materials are provided and young people must commit to attending the course on all four scheduled days. Advance booking is required.

For more information and to register, email
ateamartseducation@gmail.com



Multiply programme boosts numeracy confidence

London Multiply is a free programme designed to help adults improve their numeracy confidence and skills. The programme, delivered by Idea Store Learning, is for adults aged 19 and over who do not already have a GCSE at grade C in maths.

Multiply courses include:

- Managing your Money
- Maths for Parents
- Maths for Life and Work
- Maths for ESOL Learners
- Introduction to Functional Skills Maths

Idea Store Learning can work with partners across the borough to deliver Multiply courses and one-off workshops. Courses and workshops can be delivered at your school or venue as part of a standalone activity or a wider event you are running.

To find out more, visit
[www.ideastore.co.uk/
multiply](http://www.ideastore.co.uk/multiply)

National Apprenticeship Week information event

Come along to Tower Hamlets Town Hall on Wednesday 7 February 2024 and hear from local and national businesses about how to kick-start your career with an apprenticeship opportunity. Join the Careers and Social Mobility Team after school or work for an afternoon and evening of entertainment and information.

You will have the chance to:

- Speak directly to business apprentices
- Receive expert advice across a range of industries on the application process and what an apprenticeship will look like
- Take part in a panel discussion to have your questions answered



Open to young people, parents/carers and teaching and support staff.

Wednesday 7 February
4.30-8pm
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road, E1 1BJ

Careers Live Event

Stay tuned to find out more about the next Tower Hamlets Careers Live event – a careers fair hosted by the Careers and Social Mobility Team exhibiting a range of industries and training providers.

This event will take place on **Wednesday 22 May** and will be open to all members of the community.

For more information, email careersandsocialmobility@towerhamlets.gov.uk

End of term celebrations for Half Moon's after school clubs

Half Moon Theatre celebrated the end of the autumn term with brilliant performances from the young people in their after school clubs.

Each group focused on developing their clowning skills, guided by Half Moon's team of theatre experts and youth workers.

Performers introduced the audience to games, comedy sketches, and even an escape room adventure they created themselves!

Half Moon Theatre offers weekly after school drama clubs during term time in community spaces across the borough.



They are relaxed spaces where young people in Years 7, 8 or 9 use drama to build confidence, make friends and develop their

creativity. There are spaces for new members to join the groups – families should contact Half Moon to register their interest.

For more details, visit www.halfmoon.org.uk/after-school-drama

Training and events calendar

Parental engagement information and training for parents

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Tuesday, 6 Feb Wed, 20 March Thu, 18 April Fri, 17 May Wed, 12 June Fri, 12 July 10-11am	<p>Platform to Talk online sessions</p> <p>These virtual sessions cover a range of topical issues from health and wellbeing to family life, parenting, school and more. See page 10 for details.</p> <p>For more details, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</p>
Tuesdays 6 February 12 March, 23 April 21 May, 18 June 9 July 10am-12noon	<p>Somali Parents and Carers Network meetings</p> <p>This network meets monthly and provides opportunities for Somali parents and carers to discuss key issues around education, health and wellbeing, get information and hear from guest speakers.</p> <p>For more details, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</p>
Wednesday 24 April 9.30am-2pm	<p>Let's Talk SEND Transition Event for Parents of Year 4 and 5 children with a EHC Plan</p> <p>See page 27 for more details. Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk Tel: 020 7364 6489</p>
Thursdays 8 and 22 February 14 and 28 March 10am-12noon	<p>SEND Parent Support Group</p> <p>This group offers parents and carers of children or young people with SEND, support and information around key themes/relevant issues and an opportunity to meet other parents and carers of children with SEND. Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk</p>

Parental engagement information and training for practitioners

DESCRIPTION
<p>Working with Families: Multi-Agency Seminar</p> <p>This multi-agency forum aims to improve the exchange of information and increase links between organisations and practitioners working with parents/families in Tower Hamlets. For more information, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</p>

Useful contacts

For details of local services providing free information for Tower Hamlets residents on welfare benefits, debt, housing and other matters, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/advice

Residents' Hubs open

Residents' Hubs allow residents who cannot use online services to access face-to-face advice and support for things such as housing, council tax, benefits, domestic abuse, health, employment and debt management. There are five hubs located at:

- Town Hall in Whitechapel
- Idea Store Bow
- Idea Store Chrisp Street in Poplar
- Cubitt Town Library on the Isle of Dogs
- Professional Development Centre in Bethnal Green

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/residentshub