

FamiliesMatter

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

Annual Parent Conference 2025 Keeping Children Safe and Well



Over 130 parents attended the 18th annual Families Matter Parent Conference which took place at the Town Hall. Parents had the opportunity to attend several workshops to support families to keep children safe and well. See [pages 3-6](#) for more details.

Read the latest edition of the Families Matter magazine online at
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familiesmatter

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Welcome to the summer 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,

Parental Engagement Team, 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

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.



Families Matter Parent Conference: Keeping Children Safe and Well

The 18th annual Families Matter Parent Conference took place in June at the Town Hall. It was a huge success with over 130 people in attendance.

The event, organised by the Parent and Family Support Service, provided parents and professionals with an opportunity to meet, hear various presentations and participate in a wide range of workshops, all on topics relating to how we can protect children from harm and keep them safe and well.

Denise De-Goze, interim Head of the Parent and Family Support Service and Lisa Fraser, Tower Hamlets Director of Education, welcomed everyone to the event.

“

I am so proud of the work our Parent and Family Support Service deliver every day for our Tower Hamlets' families.

They organised a wonderful parent conference, involving a brilliant range of Children's Services teams, the wider council and partner agencies.

Steve Reddy, Corporate Director of Children's Services



”

Families Matter Parent Conference



Chris Jordan, Education Safeguarding Service (left) and Casey Guilbeau, Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team with Suzanna Dix, foster carer (right)

The speakers

Chris Jordan, from the **Education Safeguarding Service**, delivered a fascinating opening presentation, which explored **the role of parents as guardians of their children's rights**. He highlighted some of the dangers children face, particularly online, and how we can protect them from harm.

Casey Guilbeau, from the **Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team**, spoke about the need for more foster carers in the borough. He then

promoted the newly developed **Steps into Fostering course** as an access route into fostering (more details on pages [17](#) and [18](#))

Casey also introduced **Suzanna Dix**, who spoke about her personal experience as a foster carer. She described the role as rewarding, while acknowledging some of the challenges. She also talked about the support available to help foster carers succeed and encouraged more people in the borough to consider fostering.

Thank you Alison!

A special mention was given to Alison Jones who will retire from her role as Parental Engagement Lead at **Marion Richardson Primary School** at the end of the summer term.

Alison has been serving the community for over 35 years and was extensively involved with developing a programme of inclusive and SEND sports in schools across Tower Hamlets.

Everyone joined Denise De-Goze, interim Head of the Parent and Family Support Service, as she thanked Alison for her service and wished her a happy retirement.



Families Matter Parent Conference

The workshops



When Innocence is Lost

The **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Team** delivered a workshop that used the Netflix series, 'Adolescence', as a starting point to explore how we can protect children and guide them through an increasingly complex world.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/vawg



Creative Wellbeing for Family Connection

The **Parental Engagement Team** led a creative workshop that focused on family mental health and emotional wellbeing. The session demonstrated how the creative process can help relieve stress and anxiety, improve communication, and strengthen family bonds.

Email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Supporting Positive Parenting

The **Parental Engagement Team** delivered a parenting workshop that aimed to help build stronger families and confident children. The session encouraged parents to reflect on their own parenting style and discover ways to prevent or reduce challenging behaviour.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes



Community Safety: Support for young people and families

The **Community Safety Robbery and Violence Reduction Team** delivered a workshop that gave parents a chance to discuss concerns about their children's safety in the community and where they can turn for help if they're worried their child is at risk. For more information on the team's work see page [21](#).



Harm Outside the Home

The **Exploitation Team** led a workshop about young people's online world, child sexual exploitation, County Lines and the criminal exploitation of children. Discussions were held around children's friendship groups, gangs and how parents can spot the signs of their children being at risk of harm outside the home.

Email exploitation.team@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Families Matter Parent Conference

The information marketplace and community partners

The marketplace was where attendees could meet and get information from local community and service partners. Many thanks to all those who supported this year's conference.



The Parent and Family Support Service, which includes the Parental Engagement Team, provided information on parenting, healthy families and volunteering programmes, plus the SEND Information Advice and Support Service.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport

www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com

Family Information Service and Local Offer
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/localoffer

School Admissions Service
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Fostering Recruitment Team
www.fosteringtowerhamlets.co.uk

Governor Services: Become a school governor
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/schoolgovernors

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and University Bursary schemes
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ema

Children and Family Centres and Family Hubs
www.thfamilyhubs.co.uk

Reducing Parental Conflict Programme
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/rpc

No Place for Hate

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/npvh

Recycling Services

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/recycling

Bromley by Bow Centre

www.bbbc.org.uk

Talking Therapies Service (support for those feeling low, anxious or stressed)

www.elft.nhs.uk/tower-hamlets-talking-therapies

Tower of London (Historic Royal Palaces)

Community Partnerships Team

www.hrp.org.uk/about-us/communities

Sister Circle

www.sistercircle.org.uk

DLR Community Ambassadors

www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/dlr/dlr-ambassadors

Discover Children's Story Centre

www.discover.org.uk

Genesis Cinema

www.genescinema.co.uk

Parents urged to check if they are entitled to free childcare

The government has announced that, starting from September 2025, children with an 11-digit Working Family Code will be eligible for up to 1,170 hours of free early education and childcare per year with any registered childcare provider.

This funding applies to children from the term after they turn nine months old until they enter a school reception class.

Parents are urged to check now before the new term begins in September 2025.



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



Up to 15 hours of early learning for 2-year-olds

Childcare Choices offers support to parents who may need a little bit of extra help. If they receive other forms of support, they may be entitled to 15 hours of free early learning for their two-year-old child.

For more information, visit your local family hub or children and family centre.
For an eligibility check, call the Family Information Service on **020 7364 6495**.

To apply, visit bit.ly/LBTHEL2FORM

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/15-and-30-hours-childcare-support/additional-support



Support for exam result days

Students receiving their GCSE, A-level, BTEC or T-level results this August can get advice, support and guidance from Young Workpath.

The career guidance service for young people will be on hand to help students understand their options, from further education or training to apprenticeships or going straight into employment.

Drop-in sessions:

Young Workpath Centre
Idea Store Watney Market
Commercial Road, E1 2FB

Thursdays
14 and 21 August 2025
2-4.30pm

In school support will also be available on the mornings of results days.

Phone or video call support: **0800 3581 2410**
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/youngworkpath

School admissions application process for 2026

Information on the school admissions and application process for parents who are applying for a place for their child to start nursery, primary or secondary school in September 2026 will be released on the borough's school admissions webpage from September 2025.

For more information, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/schooladmissions

There will also be information sessions to support parents through the application process, delivered by the Transition Support Service.

For more details, email transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Most Tower Hamlets children get preferred primary school place

98% of children who will start primary school in Tower Hamlets this September have been offered a place at one of their preferred primary schools.

Tower Hamlets Council received nearly 3,000 applications for primary school this year. 97.6% secured a place at one of their top three preferences, while 92.3% secured their first preference school. A very small percentage did not receive an offer of a preferred school, but they have been offered a nearby alternative.

Currently there are enough places remaining at schools across the borough to accommodate new arrivals to the area.

“

The consistency of our school offers for primary school children year on year reflect the hard work of our Admissions Team and local schools.



Cllr Maium Talukdar
Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets

”



Volunteers preparing the Iftar feast at Marner Primary School

Marner Primary hosts community Iftar

Earlier this year, **Marner Primary School** held its first ever community Iftar, bringing together over 200 people from across the community to mark the holy month of Ramadan. The event was a celebration of unity, reflection, and sharing – welcoming families and staff of all faiths and backgrounds.

As the sun set, a group of pupils helped create a spiritual atmosphere with a moving Qur'an recital, followed by a heartfelt Adhan (call to prayer) by a Year 6 pupil. The fast was then broken with dates, fruit and water, and many took a moment for prayer or quiet reflection in the designated space.

The Iftar feast followed, which was prepared by parent volunteers in the school kitchen, using ingredients donated by the school. Families also brought their own home-cooked dishes to share, which added to the community spirit of the event.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with many already looking forward to next year's event.

Special thanks to Year 6 teacher, Ms Sarika, the staff and volunteers who brought this special evening to life.

“

Events like this reflect our belief in celebrating everyone. We hope to host many more opportunities that bring our community together.

Sarah Bowmer,
Headteacher, Marner Primary School

”

For more information, contact Ahsana Choudhury, Home/School Liaison Officer.
Email: ahsana.choudhury@marner.towerhamlets.sch.uk

The impact of easy-to-access financial advice on new parents

Many families struggle financially when a new baby arrives – and they're not alone. Each year, over £23 billion in welfare benefits goes unclaimed in the UK. That's money that could make a real difference to parents and their newborns.

To help address this, a new project from University College London (UCL), funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is exploring the impact of making money advice more accessible to new parents.

The project wants to find out how easy-to-access financial advice is impacting parents of new borns in Tower Hamlets. The research will look at how this kind of support affects parents' mental health, wellbeing and financial stability.

Over the summer, parents with a baby under three months, enrolling with the Health Visiting Service, will be asked if they'd



like to take part in the study. The project will take place over a

16-month period and will involve over 1,000 parents.

To find out more, visit www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/healthier-wealthier-families-east-london

School clothing grant for families this September

A school clothing grant is available to Tower Hamlets families with children starting primary and secondary schools this September.

It allows families with a household income of up to £50,350 to claim £50 per child starting in reception class at primary school and £150 per child entering Year 7 at secondary school.

Parents can apply for the grant from when they are notified of their school placement up until 30 September.

For more details on the application process, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/SCG

Holiday childcare summer scheme open for bookings

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme provides Ofsted registered inclusive childcare delivered by highly trained childcare workers and sports coaches. It will take place from **Monday 28 July to Friday 22 August 2025** at **St Anne's & Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School**, Underwood Road, E1 5AW.

The scheme is now open for bookings. It will close 12pm on 22 July 2025 or earlier if places are full.



For more information, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs

Tower Hamlets Holiday Activities and Food programme 2025

This summer, children from low-income families or those on benefits may be entitled to attend a free holiday club through the government-funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

HAF clubs provide fun activities, a free healthy meal and a safe space for children to socialise.

Last year, over 3,500 children in Tower Hamlets took part, enjoying more than 50,000 meals at 61 venues across the borough. This year's programme promises to be just as impressive.

For more details, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/haf



'Summer of Fun' in Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is gearing up for a summer packed with family-friendly activities as part of the council's annual Summer of Fun programme.

From parks to Idea Stores, local teams are offering a fantastic range of events, including sports, adventure play, arts and crafts, model boating, scavenger hunts, fishing, theatre shows and more. There's something for everyone, from toddlers to teens.

Highlights include:

- **Storytelling with The Drama Geezers** – Join an imaginative live show where children help create a brand-new story.
- **Summer Reading Challenge** – A literary adventure trail designed to keep young minds active.
- **'Snails of the Unexpected' Workshop** – Discover fun and surprising bug facts with author Terrie Chilvers.
- **Summer Art & Design Academy** – Explore the River Thames' history and environmental themes through art and design.

For full details and dates, visit:
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/summerevents

Free family activities at the Tower of London

This summer, families are invited to a day of free nature activities in the historic moat of the Tower of London. Taking place on Wednesday 6 and Tuesday 12 August, the sessions are open to all ages and devised to be fun, welcoming and inclusive.

Families can take part in guided nature activities, arts and crafts, and enjoy healthy snacks, all supported by a team of friendly staff. Participants can stay for the full session or simply drop in for a short visit.

Afterwards, families are welcome to visit the main Tower of London for free.

To register your interest, visit
forms.office.com/e/gFY40VV7hZ

Free family activities at Tower Bridge

Join Tower Bridge this summer for a series of fun, drop-in family activities – all free with entry!

- **3D Drawing Activity** – Design your own Tower Bridge character and watch it pop off the page with special 3D glasses.
Tuesday 29 July and 5 August
- **Gateway to the World** – Discover the fascinating goods that travelled up the River Thames in Victorian times.
Saturday 9 August and Tuesday 12 August
- **The Science of Sound** – Learn how sound helps people communicate across the Bridge, make your own string telephone to take home.
Tuesday 19 August and 26 August

All sessions run from 10am-4pm
 No booking required. Free with entry ticket.
 £1 entry for Tower Hamlets residents

For more details, visit www.towerbridge.org.uk/your-visit/community-ticket



Music and community festivals at Victoria Park

Tower Hamlets will once again host All Points East and In the Neighbourhood at Victoria Park this summer.

All Points East runs from 15 to 24 August, featuring major artists including Barry Can't Swim, Raye, and the Maccabees.

In the Neighbourhood takes place from 18 to 21 August and offers free entry with a range of family-friendly activities. Organised in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council, it includes live music,

creative workshops, theatre, sports, wellbeing sessions and more.

Last year's event welcomed over 10,000 visitors and celebrated the rich and diverse culture of the borough.

Residents are encouraged to follow council updates online and on social media using #LoveTowerHamlets for news and the chance to win VIP festival tickets.

For more details, visit www.allpointseastfestival.com/in-the-neighbourhood



Summer community fun days

Tower Hamlets Council is hosting a series of community fun days across local estates this summer.

These free events are open to all families and offer a great opportunity to:

- Connect with neighbours and local council teams
- Learn more about local services
- Meet local service providers at information stalls
- Enjoy free family activities, including games and entertainment

Upcoming fun days

DATE	PLACE
29 July	Shandy Park, E1
5 August	Pennyfields Park, E14
12 August	Collingwood Estate Play Area, E1
12-14 August	Ring House Play Area, E1
19 August	Brodict House Green, E3
26 August	Roman Road Market Square, E2

All events are held 2.30-6pm.

There are also community fun day events being delivered by the Family Hubs.
For more information, visit www.thfamilyhubs.co.uk/Article/175576

Stay active this summer in Tower Hamlets

Parks and green spaces

Over 120 parks including Victoria Park, Mile End Park and Bartlett Park. Perfect for walking, jogging, cycling, and outdoor gyms.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parks

Free and low-cost exercise classes

Community yoga, Zumba, bootcamps and more, often organised through Our Parks or Be Well leisure centres.

www.ourparks.org.uk/towerhamlets

Leisure centres

Be Well centres offer swimming, gym workouts, and classes at discounted rates. Girls and women-only sessions also available.

be-well.org.uk

Active travel

Walk or cycle more this summer. Cycle training available for all ages. Bike hire schemes including 'try before you buy'.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/cycling

Parent's checklist for choosing the right holiday club

Is it right for your child?

- Does it match your child's age, interests and energy level?
- Does the location, travel and the timing of the activity work for your family?



Safeguarding and child protection

All holiday clubs should have:

- A Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- A clear, written safeguarding children policy.
- Code of conduct for everyone.
- Procedures in place for dealing with bullying, behaviour and disclosures.



Good value for money

- Is the cost within your budget?
- Does the price reflect the quality of care?



Staff you can trust

- Ensure staff are DBS-checked.
- Have qualified paediatric first aiders.
- Staff have experience working with children and have had the relevant training.
- Ask the club if they follow the council's safeguarding policies.



Is the club registered?

- Clubs looking after children under eight years old for more than two hours a day must be registered with Ofsted (unless exempt). Ask for their Ofsted registration number or check online.
- All clubs should also have public liability insurance.



Supervision and ratios

- Are adult-to-child ratios appropriate?
- Are staff supervising children at all times?
- How many staff support the activity and how many children and young people attend?



Safe and secure venues

- Is the site secure, with clear check-in/check-out procedures including fire exits?
- Are play areas well-maintained and free from hazards?



Health, allergies and emergencies

- How does the club manage allergies, medications or special needs?
- Is there a health and safety policy which includes illness and injury?



Communication is key

Good holiday clubs will:

- Provide updates on your child's day.
- Provide a contact number for emergencies.
- Have a clear pick-up policy, including who can collect your child.
- Allow you to visit the session before your child starts and stay to observe.
- Have someone on hand to speak to if you have any concerns.



Provided by Rajna Choudhury, Children's Interfaith Safeguarding Co-ordinator part of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care. Rajna supports faith settings to understand best practice and the statutory expectations of safeguarding children and delivers awareness workshops, safeguarding training, webinars as well as bespoke training on request.

For more information, call 020 7364 2818 or email rajna.choudhury@towerhamlets.gov.uk.



Emotional First Aid in Bengali

John Smith Family Hub hosted a six-week Emotional First Aid (EFA) course in June. The course, delivered in Bengali by practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, gave parents a chance to share their experiences and learn how to manage stress and anxiety.

The EFA course supports parents to understand how their

own emotional health and stress may impact upon family life and parenting their children.

The course helped break down language barriers and made space for open and honest conversations. Parents learned the difference between stress and anxiety, how to identify their own triggers and were also given practical ways to cope.

“

We enjoyed learning about the difference between stress and anxiety and having the opportunity to express ourselves amongst the group.

Course participant

”

For more details or to book a course for your school or setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Helping families to communicate better

With summer holidays on the way, family life can sometimes feel more stressful than usual. A free online learning programme which helps parents manage stress and get along better is available to Tower Hamlets residents.

The OnePlusOne learning programme, which includes courses such as 'Arguing Better', gives parents the tools to communicate better and prevent small frustrations leading to bigger conflicts.



For more details, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.
or email caroline.morgan2@towerhamlets.gov.uk
To register for the programme, visit www.oneplusone.org.uk/parents



Join the next Steps into Fostering course this autumn

Sixteen prospective foster carers completed the first ever Steps into Fostering course last December. They enjoyed learning more about the role of a foster carer, child development and attachment and how they can support children's health and wellbeing.

The Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team, together with the Parental Engagement Team, have begun recruiting for the second course which will start at the end of September.

The course, which is accredited by the Open College Network and delivered by the Parental Engagement Team, aims to support those interested in fostering by giving them an overview of the role as well as an understanding of how to support children's development and wellbeing.

It is hoped that the course will help address the shortage of foster carers in the borough and provide an access route into fostering.

For more details, see page [18](#).

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

Access to Fostering scheme



Are you curious about becoming a Foster Carer, but need support with the process?

Join the Open College Network accredited course

You will learn about:

- The role of the Foster Carer
- The skills needed to become a Foster Carer
- Child development and attachment
- Supporting children's learning, health and wellbeing
- Keeping children safe from harm
- Encouraging positive behaviour.

To find out if you may be eligible for the course, come along to one of the information sessions on:

- 9 September 2025, 10-11am
- 16 September 2025, 10-11am
- 23 September 2025, 10-11am

The Parents Advice Centre,
30 Greatorex Street, E1 5NP

The 11-week course starts on
24 September 2025.



For more details,
telephone 020 7364 1246 or email
fostering@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Leave your name and number and we will call you back

This course is a co-production between the Parent & Family Support Service and Fostering.

Tower Hamlets Parent and Family Support Service

Parenting programmes

At times, all parents and carers need help and advice to deal with the everyday challenges of family life. The Parental Engagement Team offer a range of support, information and programmes to support families as their children develop and grow.

Parenting programmes allow parents to share their parenting experiences, learn new skills to deal with challenging behaviour and manage conflict in a positive way.

PROGRAMME	ELIGIBILITY	INFORMATION
Early Repair	All fathers and male carers	Early repair is a brief awareness raising, two-day 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.
Parent Plus ADHD Programme	5-16 years	A programme for parents with children awaiting a diagnosis or diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The course will cover information to help understand the diagnosis and treatment, strategies to support your child and manage difficult behaviour and how to advocate on your child's behalf within the education system. Nine weekly sessions.

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

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

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport



Family Hubs parenting support offer

Family Hubs offer parenting support in partnership with local partners and stakeholders. Their parenting programme offers a range of support from pregnancy onwards, enabling families to choose sessions based on their individual needs.

It aims to support parents with the following:

- Pregnancy and preparing to become a parent
- Babies and toddlers
- Understanding a child's/teenager's behaviour
- Child's health and wellbeing
- Child's additional needs
- Relationship with your child
- Domestic or family abuse
- Personal development.

For more information, visit:

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parenteducation

Understanding Family Hubs online sessions

Professionals are invited to further their understanding of Family Hubs at an online session being held every second month. It brings together local services and support for children, young people and their families.

With the successful launch of Family Hub sites across the borough, this session offers a guided introduction to how Family Hubs operate, the support they offer and how they are helping to build stronger communities through collaboration and shared values.

This session takes place online, every second month, on the first Wednesday, 2.30-4pm. Participants will explore:

- Family Hubs' purpose, vision and principles
- How families can access Family Hub services
- The growing network of Family Hub partners
- The Shared Behaviours Framework

To find out more or to book your place, email nasima.rahman@towerhamlets.gov.uk

24 Essential Services with Family Hubs

Are you expecting a child? Do you have children aged 0-19 (or up to 25 with SEND)?

Explore our 24 essential Family Hub services!

We offer a welcoming space, expert advice and practical help including:

- Activities for 0-5 year olds
- Parenting and mental health support
- Youth and SEND services
- Housing and debt advice
- Domestic abuse support
- and more.

Scan the QR code and download the full list of our 24 essential services.

thfamilyhubs.co.uk



Meet the Robbery Reduction Team

In response to a rise in violent robberies, the Robbery Reduction Team was formed in 2024 to offer targeted support to young people in Tower Hamlets. The team was set up as a response to the need for alternative approaches, given that many affected young people were not accessing help through traditional services such as A&E.

The team supports young people aged 10 to 17, whether they have experienced robbery or have been involved in crime themselves.

Robbery Reduction caseworkers are based in schools several days a week, delivering one-to-one sessions which focus on:

- Emotional and physical wellbeing
- Anger management
- Building positive relationships
- Increasing awareness of risk
- Rebuilding trust and confidence
- Supporting young people to feel safe in their communities.



*Marvin Charles,
Robbery Reduction Team*

The team also works to raise awareness around safety and the risks of criminal exploitation. Their efforts focus on prevention, education and community engagement.

If you would be interested in the team running an awareness raising workshop in your school or setting for parents, email marvin.charles@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Supporting emotional wellbeing

Residents in Tower Hamlets can access free online, evidence-based courses. They are designed to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-19.

They have been developed by clinical psychologists in collaboration with practitioners

and parents and cover a range of topics including:

- Antenatal and postnatal baby bonding
- Understanding your child or young person
- Supporting children with additional needs
- Teenage brain development and emotional wellbeing

To get started, visit www.inourplace.co.uk and enter the code **LBTHFH**.

Free early years parent support workshops offer for schools and settings

The Parental Engagement Team are pleased to invite schools and settings that work with families who have children aged 0-2 years to host some of their newly developed one-off workshops for parents.

The sessions give parents an insight into key developmental milestones and help them to support their child's learning and development.

They will also learn about the importance of connection and attachment at the early stage.

The funded one-hour workshops have been developed under the government's Start for Life Family Hubs programme and are on the following topics:

- Establishing good sleep routines
- Healthy families for the early years
- Active families
- Child development for parents
- Oral health
- Little voices/big feelings

For more information or to express and interest in hosting a workshop, email fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Jaxson preparing his chicken fajita at the Ministry of Food session at the Holiday Childcare Scheme

Ministry of Food at the Easter Holiday Childcare Scheme

Children from the Holiday Childcare Scheme have been discovering how cooking together can be fun and good for your health. They took part in a special cooking session called 'Ministry of Food' during the Easter scheme.

The Ministry of Food session, devised by Jamie Oliver and delivered by trained practitioners from the Parental Engagement

Team, emphasises the benefits of preparing your own meals from scratch using fresh ingredients.

The children enjoyed learning recipes from around the globe, as well as gaining some professional knife skills, which they used to chop the ingredients for their Mexican chicken fajitas.

“

I really enjoy the session – we learned how to cut with sharp knives and cook with ingredients to get great flavour from the food.

Jaxson

”

To book a Ministry of Food course for parents and/or children at your school or setting, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Council wins award for healthy food policy

Tower Hamlets Council has won the 'Best Local Healthy Food Advertising Policy' award at the Children's Food Awards, hosted by Sustain's Children's Food Summit, recognising its efforts to tackle childhood obesity and promote healthy eating.

The council's Healthier Food Advertising Policy, launched in 2023, bans unhealthy food advertising across council-owned spaces and contracts. The move is part of a broader strategy to improve children's health.

Research shows that exposure to unhealthy food advertising can shape children's eating habits. In response, the council has introduced several initiatives, including:



- Free school meals for all primary and secondary pupils
- The Food for Health award scheme, to encourage local businesses to offer healthier food options
- Planning restrictions on new fast food takeaways near schools

- Fruit and vegetable voucher schemes for low-income families.



To find out more about Tower Hamlets healthy food advertising policy, click [here](#).

Improving outcomes for women in Tower Hamlets

A Women's Commission has been set up to reduce inequalities women face in society.

Although some progress has been made, women continue to face unequal outcomes compared to men. For example, the 2021 Census revealed that a woman's healthy life expectancy is 7.5 years shorter than a man's in Tower Hamlets.

The Women's Commission wants to create a more inclusive borough where gender inequalities are addressed. They will be holding a series of engagement sessions over the summer asking residents to help develop actions that will create better outcomes for all women. Local women are encouraged to get involved through in-person interviews, an online questionnaire and community workshops.



To find out more, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/womenscommission

Bags of Taste: free home mentored cooking programme

Are you worried about the rising cost of food and how to eat healthily on a tight budget? Join a Bags of Taste free and fun cooking course.

Learn how to cook delicious and healthy meals from all over the world whilst saving money. It's easily accessible for parents and allows children to get involved in the cooking process. They will also enjoy trying out new flavours and ingredients.

How does it work?

Bags of Taste deliver a bag of ingredients straight to your door. You will also have a specially-assigned mentor who will support you by phone or Whatsapp message. They will guide you through three delicious and low-cost recipes over two weeks. Your mentor will share tips and advice along the way and will be there for any questions that you may have.



Register online: www.bagsoftaste.org/courses/course-registration

Tel: 07807 398 181 Email: towerhamlets@bagsoftaste.org

Spaces are limited and for qualifying participants only.

Free prenatal yoga and mindfulness classes

Inclusive classes for all levels

- ★ Mondays 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM at Be Well Whitechapel E1 5BA
- ★ Thursdays 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM at York Hall Leisure Centre E2 9PJ
- ★ Scan the QR code for details on how to join!

Sponsored by Tower Hamlets Council



www.happity.co.uk/the-mindful-mother




PARENTS AND CARERS:

Your mental health matters

Learn about the support options available to help you feel your best, build relationships and cope with life challenges during pregnancy and the early years:

thfamilyhubs.co.uk/Page/30527



Speak to your Health Visitor or GP, or call 111 option 2 to get access to local mental health crisis support 24/7.

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



SEND inspection update

The Tower Hamlets Local Area SEND Inspection took place between Monday 9 June and Friday 27 June. Inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) met with our staff, reviewed information, and spoke to our children, young people, parents, carers, and professionals as part of the process.

As well as looking at how well services across Tower Hamlets – including council, education, social care and health services – work together to support our children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and their families, inspectors were particularly focused on the experiences and outcomes of our children and young people with SEND and how we listen to and act upon the voice of the child.

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in the inspection process, especially our parents, carers and young people who took the time to complete surveys and meet with inspectors.

Although the process proved to be an intense three weeks, it's been a genuinely positive experience with a great deal of learning. We expect the final report to be published in the autumn, and we will share this with you once available.

Steve Reddy
Corporate Director,
Children's Services



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



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

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.

New parent led group for local SEND parents

Raising a child with complex needs can often feel isolating, especially when those around you don't fully understand the daily challenges involved. For one east London mum, this sense of isolation became a turning point.

Sabha is the parent of five-year-old Yahya, who was born with a rare genetic condition. Yahya is deaf, blind and lives with several additional needs. While surrounded by friends and family, Sabha often found herself unable to speak freely about her experiences. She felt she had to hold back, worried that others wouldn't relate.

It was only in the company of other parents of children with SEND that she began to feel truly seen and heard. These connections brought comfort and a space where she could speak freely without judgement. Inspired by this, Sabha launched a local coffee group, specifically for SEND parents and carers, called Chat and Chai.

The idea is simple – a welcoming space to come together over a cup of tea, with no pressure to talk unless you want to. The group offers an opportunity to share experiences, exchange advice, or just be in the company of others who understand the realities of raising a child with additional needs.

The group is currently meeting on the last Friday of the month, during term time.



To find out more or to join the group, email sabha.khan@hotmail.co.uk
If you have specific questions about anything related to your child's needs
please call the SENDIASS Advice Line 020 7364 6489.

Our Time inclusive all-ability youth forum



Our Time is an all-ability youth forum, run for and by young people between the ages of 14-25 with special educational needs and disabilities.

It has been set up so that young people can:

- Get their voices heard
- Gain new experiences and skills
- Meet new people and build confidence
- Find out about their rights
- Raise awareness and campaign for change

For more details or to join the forum, email ourtimeyf@gmail.com

Let's Talk SEND event: Navigating autism and social communication differences in young children

The Let's Talk SEND Waiting Well ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) event was held in May at the Town Hall and was attended by over 140 parents and professionals.

Organised by Barts Health NHS Trust in partnership with the council, the event aimed to support parents and carers of children aged 0-7, regardless of whether their child had received a formal diagnosis or not.

The event, designed to empower parents through community engagement, began with attendees visiting information stalls and meeting service providers. A presentation followed which offered guidance on the SEND system and provided updates from services.



Representatives from the NHS, education sector, Parent Carer Forums and SEND teams were on hand to share advice and guidance on local resources, early support and inclusion

pathways. The event ended with more opportunities for families to speak directly with professionals and connect with one another in a relaxed and supportive environment.



For more details and to find out about upcoming Let's Talk SEND events, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.

Inclusive family swimming sessions at Tiller Leisure Centre

Tiller Leisure Centre are hosting swimming sessions for families with children up to 16 years who have special educational needs or disabilities. The centre is wheelchair accessible and has accessible changing facilities.

The sessions are not instructor led so children must be accompanied by an adult with a maximum of two children per adult.

Sessions

Saturdays, 12-12.45pm and 1-1.45pm

Sundays, 12-12.45pm and 1-1.45pm

Tiller Leisure Centre, E14 8PX



Booking required. Visit www.be-well.org.uk/family-sen-swimming-sessions

Support for dads to get involved with their child's learning

A session is being held for dads and male carers of children with SEND to help them get involved with their child's learning. The session is being delivered by the SENDIASS team and will include tips, advice and support, including:

- How to support their child's learning at home
- Effective communication strategies with teachers
- Fun activities to do with their child
- Resources and support available for SEND families.

Wednesday 6 August, 10-11.30am
Ocean Children and Family Centre,
Whitehorse Road, E1 0ND



For more information, email mark.penn@towerhamlets.gov.uk
 or call 07858 689 243



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, call 07498 573872 or email thesendforum@gmail.com
www.thsendforum.co.uk

SEND play at the Young V&A's Mini Museum

Children and their carers are invited to enjoy a session on **Saturday 2 August, 10.30am-12pm** to explore sensory materials at the Mini Museum at the Young V&A's Play Gallery. It is open to children of any age with additional sensory needs.

Other sensory-friendly sessions

- Sensory Friendly Storytelling for Families
Fridays, 25 July, 1, 8 and 15 August
10.15-11.15am
The Stage, Imagine Gallery
Free, pre-booking via website
- Sensory Friendly Studio for Families
Thursday 28 August
11am-12.30pm and 2-3.30pm
Community Room
Free, pre-booking via website



Visit www.vam.ac.uk/festival/2025/summer-school-holiday-at-young-va
or email yvalearningevent@vam.ac.uk

Tower Hamlets new SEND and Inclusion Strategy

The new Tower Hamlets SEND and Inclusion Strategy sets out the priorities the Local Area SEND Partnership will work towards over the next five years. These priorities were developed in discussion with young people, parents, carers and the professionals who make up the SEND Local Area workforce.

The improvements

- Clearer emphasis of the role of the SEND partnership
- Better sharing of outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- More commitment to alternative provision for children and young people with SEND
- More effective performance measures

The priorities

- Timely, effective and well-coordinated support
- User-friendly services and early identification
- Support for the under-fives
- Effective education and support for school-age children with SEND
- Opportunities and support for young adults with SEND
- Children and young people with SEND are celebrated, valued and supported to thrive

Read the full strategy [here](#)
or scan the QR code.



Sensory Station fun day for SEND families

Over the second May bank holiday, the Sensory Station made its debut at the Tarling East Community Centre. The idea was born in 2023, when SEND Parent Ambassador, Tahmina Choudhury, attended Queen Mary University's Festival of Communities, and noted the lack of inclusive activities for SEND families. Teaming up with fellow Ambassador, Suhela Khatun-Hussein, and Our Time Youth Forum, the group planned to launch the Sensory Station at the next festival, but when Queen Mary cancelled the event, the team faced a setback.

Determined to make the project a reality, Tahmina and Suhela successfully applied for a Communities Keeping Well grant from NHS North East London. The funding enabled them to host the Sensory Station fun day, which welcomed 62 families from across the borough. The event featured a bubble machine, themed sensory boards, sensory activities and a goodie bag for families to take home. It is hoped that this will become an annual event in the borough.



For more information, email sendparentambassadors@gmail.com

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Workshop

The Tower Hamlets & City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) are delivering a workshop for parents to provide key information about the EHCP process, including:

- What is an EHCP?
- What is the purpose?
- What is the process?
- What makes a good EHCP?

Wednesday 3 September, 9am-1pm
John Smith Family Hub
90 Stepney Way, E1 2ES

For more information or to book a place call 020 7364 6489 or email towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Youth Centre opens in Bethnal Green

Over 300 young people celebrated the opening of the new Bethnal Green Youth Centre in April. The activity-packed event included boxing, basketball, table tennis, arts and crafts, gaming and more.

The centre offers free sessions for young people aged 11–19,

and up to age 25 with SEND. It aims to provide a safe, supportive space where young people can learn new skills, access advice and build confidence.

It's part of the council's goal to establish a youth centre in every ward in the borough.

“

Our youth centres are vital spaces for learning, inspiration and growth.

Cllr Maium Talukadar,
Deputy Mayor Tower Hamlets

”

For more information about youth centres, visit www.youngtowerhamlets.org.uk

Family Information Service and Local Offer outreach sessions

The Family Information Service is offering outreach sessions in local settings. Schools, children and family centres, and community groups are invited to host the Family Information Service at events such as parent evenings, fun days, coffee mornings or any occasion where families are present.

Having the service present at these events is a great way for parents to learn more about the Family Information Service, the Local Offer and SENDIASS.

Sessions can be tailored to meet the needs of your families, whether it is providing information on childcare options, family support or other essential services.

To arrange a visit or discuss your event, email

fis@towerhamlets.gov.uk

For more information, visit

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/localoffer

or call the Family Information Service on 020 7364 6495.

Family Information Service – Information Marketplace Event

Thursday 23 October 2025

10am-2pm

**Tower Hamlets Town Hall Grocers Wing,
160 Whitechapel Road, E1 1BJ**

Join the Family Information Service at the upcoming information marketplace event.

This is a fantastic opportunity for families and professionals to come together, meet a wide range of stallholders and gather valuable information on local services and support.

Whether you're looking for childcare options, family activities, health advice or professional networking, there's something for everyone. Don't miss this chance to connect, ask questions and discover what's available in your community.

For more information, email

fis@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Working with Families Seminar opportunity: Tower Bridge community group leader training

The Learning and Community Engagement Team at Tower Bridge will be running a free training session tailored for staff in schools who lead on parental engagement.

This session will be delivered as part of the Parental Engagement Team's Working with Families Seminar training offer to professionals who work with families.

This session will prepare participants to bring groups of parents to Tower Bridge, and provide access to their £1 ticket scheme, which is not normally available to groups.

Working with Families Seminar:

Tower Bridge community group leader training

**Thursday 16 October 2025
1-4pm**

Places are limited.

To sign up, email

fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Information sessions and events for parents

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Thursdays, Fortnightly Term time only 10am-12pm	SEND parent support group 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
Wednesday 3 September 2025 9am-1pm	Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Workshop Workshop for parents on the EHCP process. For more information see page 30 . Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Thursday 4 September 2025 10.15am-1pm	Home Education Information Event A workshop with a topical theme in a community venue for parents and carers who electively home educate their children. Delivered by the Education Safeguarding Service in partnership with the Parental Engagement Team. For more information, email jeasmin.begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Thursday 23 October 2025 10am-2pm	Family Information Service Information Marketplace Event Tower Hamlets Town Hall An opportunity for families and professionals to come together, meet a wide range of stallholders and gather valuable information on local services and support. For more information see page 32 . Email: fis@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Information and training for professionals

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Thursday 16 October 2025 1-4pm	Working with families: multi-agency seminar Tower Bridge community group leader training 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. The next seminar will be hosted and delivered by the Tower Bridge Community Engagement Team. For more information see page 32 . Email: parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Residents' Hubs open across the borough

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.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/residentshub

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

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