

Families Matter

A magazine full of news and information to support families

Bumper 'Summer of Play'

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme plus hundreds of activities and new playground equipment adds up to a summer of fun for children and young people across the borough. See pages 25-26 for more details.



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Welcome to the autumn edition of Families Matter

I hope you have had a fantastic summer and enjoyed the wide range of activities and events which took place across the borough as part of the Bounce Back to Play programme.

Many children and young people will be starting the new academic year in a new school or class. It is an exciting time for children, parents and school/setting staff and although it may feel a little daunting, everyone should soon settle into the new routine. As children make new friends and start new activities, it's a good time for parents to also consider taking part in new activities.

Take a look at page 26 and find out how you can become a more active citizen, meet new people and join the Tower Hamlets Parent and Carer Council.

I suspect that many of us found maintaining physical activity and a healthy lifestyle really difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased freedom over the last few months has encouraged us all to consider the need to move more and eat a healthier diet.

This edition is packed with updates and information to guide parents and support practitioners in their work with families. You can find tips for a healthy packed lunch alongside ideas to help children manage change as they return to school and much, much more.

We hope you find it useful and welcome your feedback and contributions, so please email and tell us what else you would like to see in future editions.

Best wishes,
Jill McGinley
 Head of 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 receive the latest news and information to support your work by email. Encourage your colleagues to sign up to the Parental Engagement Team's network mailing list.

Email: parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Families Matter
 Bitesize E-bulletin

Parental Engagement
 School Transition
 Parenting
 SEND
 Local Offer
 Information
 Support
 Holiday Childcare
 Parent Voice

Messages from the Parent and Family Support Service

Families Matter: Bitesize E-bulletin

In addition to the regular termly Families Matter magazine there is a monthly e-bulletin. This gives regular updates, information, advice, and support for all parents, guardians and carers in Tower Hamlets.

Parents and carers 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 and Culture Directorate. To share news in future editions of Families Matter contact

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Email: fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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 the abbreviation of special educational needs and disabilities.

Supporting your child's move to secondary school

Secondary transfer online advice sessions

The move to secondary school is an important moment both for children and their parents. It offers all sorts of new opportunities, but it also can cause anxiety and confusion. There are only a few weeks to apply for secondary



schools, so it's vital parents have as much information as possible in order to make an informed decision about their child's future.

To support families with the secondary transition process, the Pupil Services and the Transition

Support Service are holding online advice sessions in September and October at the following times:

DAY	DATE	TIME
Thursday	9 September	4pm
Friday	10 September	10am
Monday	13 September	1pm
Wednesday	15 September	6pm
Friday	17 September	10am
Tuesday	21 September	1pm
Thursday	23 September	10am
Monday	27 September	6pm
Wednesday	29 September	1pm
Tuesday	5 October	10am
Friday	8 October	10am
Monday	11 October	6pm
Thursday	14 October	1pm
Tuesday	19 October	10am
Thursday	21 October	10am

Book your place by clicking [here](#).

Transition Support Service

The Transition Support Service provides impartial advice, information and assistance to support children, young people and their families during key points of transition such as moving from primary to secondary school.

The service is available to all Tower Hamlets families and can be accessed via self-referral or referral from professionals with consent. The team also supports and advises on a range of school issues including school admissions, managed moves, school exclusion and bullying.

Email: transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7364 1533

Web: www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/organisations/28075-transition-support-service

Secondary transition resources for families

Secondary transition is an exciting yet daunting time. Getting used to new learning and social environment, alongside the physical and psychological changes of adolescence... there's a lot going on.

To support families navigate this significant milestone, the Tower Hamlets Educational Psychology Service (THEPS) has produced a series of useful resources for children and parents.

- Moving On booklet for children [here](#)
- Moving On booklet for parents [here](#)
- Webinar for parents [here](#)



Helping children manage change

It's normal for children to feel anxious about change. The pandemic and the disruption to education it caused may mean that children are particularly worried about returning to school this year. There are many practical ways we can help them manage change and ease their return to school.

Give them time

Nobody likes things sprung on them at the last minute and the same can be said for children experiencing any sort of change. Give children time to process change and help them understand time scales. This can be in the form of visual daily or weekly timetables or just talking about upcoming events.

Give them some control

Feeling out of control can be a very uncomfortable experience. Providing children with some say over the way in which transitions happen can help them feel more comfortable. This could be allowing them to choose some things like what they would like for their packed lunch. Something little for them to feel familiar with and in control of can significantly shift their focus from feeling out of control.

Reassure them

Leaving somewhere familiar and starting somewhere new can be a daunting experience. Give children an opportunity to share their concerns. Children often fear practical things about change: Where will they have

lunch? How will they get there? Spend time discussing their fears and reassure them that it is okay to feel scared – it doesn't mean that the change is bad.

Model positive attitudes to change

Model handling uncomfortable feelings and anxieties. Children absorb what they see and hear. Let them see you experiencing transitions and show them how you manage.

Help them prepare

Whether it is doing a practice run of a new journey, looking at pictures of a new school or even finding opportunities for children to socialise with new friends, help them prepare for change in as many ways you can!

Kidscape back to school programme

The pandemic has had a huge impact on children's lives and they will need support to transition back to school life. Kidscape's Back to School programme helps children return to school feeling safe, confident and supported.

The programme is aimed at children aged 9-12 years and provides free downloadable resources for teachers, parents and children.

The programme includes top tips for families as well as

signposting to other Kidscape services such as transition support, bullying awareness, resilience workshops, parent advice and more.

Visit their website [here](#).



Bike to School Week

Bike to School Week takes place between 27 September and 1 October 2021. Organised by Sustrans and supported by the Bikeability Trust, it celebrates cycling to school and the benefits it has on children's health and wellbeing, as well as the environment. It's hoped that the week will inspire families to think about their journeys to school, understand the benefits of active travel and consider the causes and effects of air pollution.

To support the week, there are free downloadable resources available including inspiring posters, daily activities, informative videos and presentations.

View the resources [here](#).



Sustainable Travel: Active, Responsible, Safe (STARS) support for schools

STARS is Transport for London's accreditation scheme for London schools and nurseries. It inspires young Londoners to travel to school sustainably, actively, responsibly and safely by championing walking, scooting and cycling. The scheme supports pupils' wellbeing, helps to reduce congestion at the school gates and improves road safety and air quality.

The average journey to school is less than one kilometre, that's around a ten minute walk. However, many of these journeys are made by car leading to congestion and an unsafe and polluted environment for us all. By swapping car journeys for active travel, STARS schools can help us move towards a healthier, less congested London.

For more details and to sign up to the STARS scheme, click [here](#).

School clothing grant

There is still time to apply for a school clothing grant. If you are eligible there is a grant available to help towards the cost of a school uniform for children aged 11 who are changing from primary to secondary school. Only one grant is payable during a child's school life.

Applications can be made up until 30 September and in some circumstances late applications will also be considered. Check your eligibility and apply for the grant [here](#).



Give lunch boxes a healthy makeover!

There is no time like the start of the school year to give packed lunches a healthy makeover. Follow these inspiring lunch box tips devised by the Parental Engagement Team and get off to a healthy start.

Keep them fuller for longer

Base your lunch box on wholegrain bread, rice, pasta. They are higher in fibre and will help them stay fuller for longer.



Introduce more wholegrains

If your child doesn't like wholegrains, try making a sandwich with one slice of white bread and one slice of wholemeal bread.



Ditch the sugary snacks

Swap cakes, chocolates and biscuits that are high in sugar for healthier alternatives such as malt loaf, fruit breads or fruit.



Choose lower fat options

Choose low fat and low sugar yoghurt or fromage frais. Instead of buying flavoured yoghurt, add your own fresh fruit to plain low fat yoghurt.



Get the children involved

Let them choose and prepare what goes into their lunch box. They are more likely to eat it if they have been involved in making it.



Be careful with dried fruit

Dried fruit counts towards their five a day, but it can stick to teeth so should only be eaten at mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay.



Check your cheese for fat and salt

Cheese can be high in fat and salt. If you choose stronger tasting cheese, you won't need as much of it. Or try using reduced fat varieties.



Be creative and adventurous

Children like novelty and variety, so be creative and mix up what goes into their lunch box or present the food in a fun way.



Back to school sleep hygiene tips

Sleep hygiene is all about how daytime as well as night-time habits influence the quality of our sleep. Follow these simple sleep hygiene tips to ensure everyone feels rested and ready for school.

Exercise regularly

Exercise promotes sleep and reduces stress but remember not to exercise too close to bedtime. This can be over-stimulating and prevent sleep.

Avoid too many extracurricular activities

While it may be fun to have a schedule full of activities, free time and rest time are also important for a child's development. Less time spent on extra-curricular activities is also associated with better quality sleep for teenagers.



Limit napping

Napping in teenage years is linked to shorter and poorer sleep at night. Naps should not be taken if they interfere with sleep at night. However, if your child needs to nap to function well for the rest of the day, try to keep the naps less than 30 minutes long.

Avoid caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant found in soft drinks, coffee, tea, and energy drinks. Caffeine can keep your child alert and awake well after bedtime, so should be avoided.



Families Connect

Families Connect is an evidence-based programme developed by Save the Children to support parents and carers to engage in their children's learning. It gives parents the confidence to support their children's learning at home, building on their existing skills and knowledge.

The eight-week programme strengthens relationships between families and schools while providing opportunities for parents to share parenting experiences with each other. The programme provides a series of activities and games that parents can do with their children at home – all with the aim of helping their child's social, emotional, literary, language and mathematical development.

The programme is designed for families with three- to six-year-olds and is available to schools, nurseries, and children's centres. Facilitators are provided with a free package which includes training, a delivery manual, and family handouts that are available in Bengali, Hindi, Somali, and Urdu.

Free training is available for staff this autumn. To find out more or to reserve your place, contact

Email: b.lawson@savethechildren.org.uk

Visit: savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/uk-work/in-schools/families-connect

New term – a great time for reading

The start of the school year is the perfect time to start creating a new reading routine with children. Many parents have a consistent routine with younger children, but often ditch the daily reading habit once their child reaches Key Stage 2 or their child can read independently. But a regular reading routine benefits all children regardless of their Key Stage. It helps facilitate enriched language exposure, helps develop listening skills, spelling and reading comprehension.

Parents reading aloud to children can also activate areas of the brain related to narrative comprehension and mental imagery, so it is also beneficial for children's cognitive development.

Research suggests that we should not stop reading with children just because they have learned to read independently. We should continue reading with them, ensuring that these experiences are enjoyable, as they can influence children's future attitudes towards reading, as well as building their confidence and competence as readers.

To find out more or to book a reading workshop for parents at your school or setting email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

To find out about volunteering to support children reading this September, see page 27.





Ministry of Food cooking course for parents

Parents from **Central Foundation School for Girls** have been discovering how cooking from scratch can be good for health and save money.

They took part in the 'Ministry of Food' cooking course delivered by the Parental Engagement Team. This eight-week programme, devised by Jamie Oliver, emphasises the health and financial benefits of cooking from scratch.

During the course, parents were encouraged to make small changes to improve the health of their families. Many of the parents reported a change in their cooking and eating habits as they discovered how easy it is to prepare cost-effective, home-cooked meals.

The course introduced the parents to new ingredients and cooking methods while exploring issues such as portion size and mindful eating. Healthy eating principles were a key feature of the course and parents enjoyed trying out recipes from around the world that were low in salt, sugar and fat.



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I have made some simple changes like cutting down on salt. I know it's going to benefit my family.

Parent

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Change for Good by Social Action for Health

Change for Good is a free, 12-week online programme that supports you make positive lifestyle changes to improve health and wellbeing. One focus of the programme is healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight.

Participants learn how to set achievable goals, control cravings and prevent regaining weight.

Sessions are delivered in different community languages by local, qualified tutors. Sign up for the programme [here](#).

10 Healthy Eating Tips



1. Try using a non-stick pan and only 1 teaspoon of oil when cooking



2. Always go for leaner cuts of meat and don't forget to trim fat before cooking



3. Eat different coloured fruit/vegetables to get a full range of nutrients



4. Use lots of different spices and herbs to flavour your food instead of salt



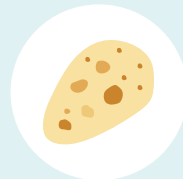
5. Swap white rice for wholegrain which is higher in fibre



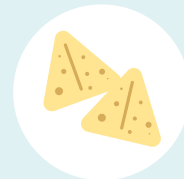
6. Use smaller sized plates – it's a good trick to help reduce portion sizes



7. Try to avoid adding too much butter or ghee when cooking meals



8. Try grilling items such as naan breads and chapatis instead of frying



9. Avoid deep frying and try grilling or oven baking items like samosas



10. Keep sweet treats like cake, biscuits and chocolate for special occasions

Healthy Holidays summer booklet

The Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) has been successfully delivered in Tower Hamlets since 2020. The programme has brought over two million pounds to the borough to help run holiday programmes for children from lower income families.

Co-ordinated by the council's Tackling Poverty Team, the programme aims to make free holiday activity places available for children who are eligible for free school meals, easing the financial pressures on families over the holidays. The programme hopes to improve health and wellbeing and inspire families to adopt healthy eating habits. The successful summer programme took place in various settings from parks to community centres and schools. The Tackling Poverty Team worked closely with partners including the Parental Engagement Team to produce a family friendly 'Healthy Holidays' summer booklet which was given out to children attending and their families.

You can view the booklet [here](#). For more information on the summer activities provided for children and young people click [here](#) or see page 25.



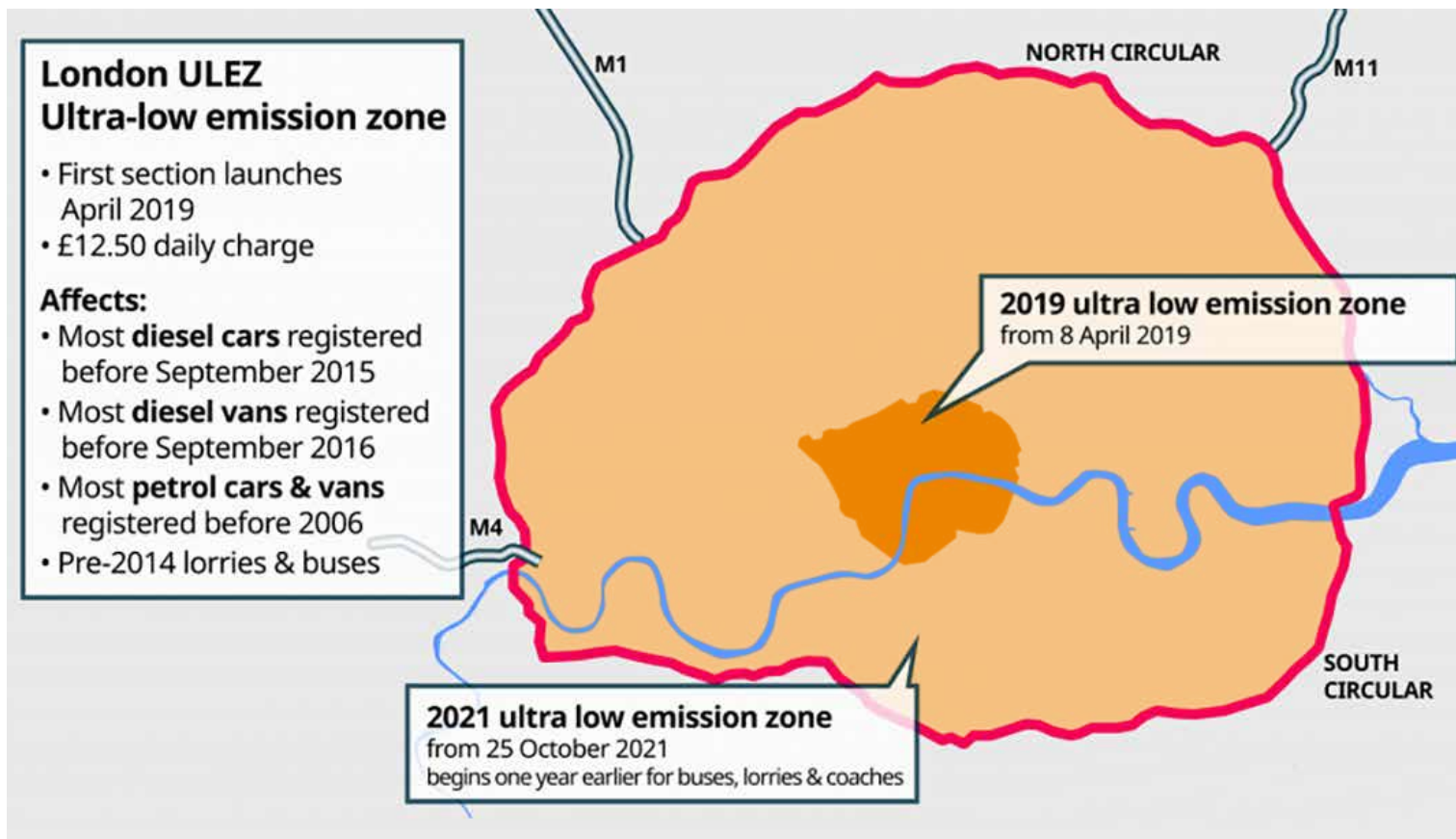
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The Parental Engagement Team have created a fantastic booklet with fun activities, nutritional education, delicious recipes and information on where families can get support. It's been an invaluable resource to help children get the right messages about eating well and staying active.

Dominic Hinde
Tackling Poverty Team Leader

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Tower Hamlets becomes part of Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)



Air pollution is not just a central London problem – many areas in Tower Hamlets still exceed the legal limits for pollution. That's why from 25 October 2021, the central ULEZ is expanding to create a single, larger zone.

The new zone will expand up to, but not including, the North Circular (A406) and South Circular (A205) roads, with Tower Hamlets falling within the new zone.

The ULEZ will continue to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends with a £12.50 daily charge for vehicles that do not meet the required emissions standards.

Most vehicles already meet the ULEZ emissions standards, but if you are unsure, you can check your vehicle [here](#).

Advice on moving away from the car

For advice on moving away from the car to public transport, and for shorter journeys cycling or walking wherever possible, visit the [Tower Hamlets website](#).

Schools and settings can also support pupils to walk and cycle to school by joining Transport for London's accredited sustainable travel scheme. For more information see page 5.



Shake-Up games to get active!

There are lots of benefits to being active – from feeling stronger to sleeping better and even feeling happier.

Public Health's 10-minute Shake-Up campaign aims to inspire families to become more active and enjoy all these benefits through games inspired by Disney, Pixar and Marvel characters. Shake-up breaks up the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day into easy 10-minute chunks that can be done anywhere.

You can even take a quiz to get a personalised game recommendation based on your favourite characters. So shake things up and let the fun begin!

Join the Shake Up campaign [here](#).



Well One, a wellbeing partnership

Health and wellbeing remains a key focus for many organisations in Tower Hamlets. To coordinate this, like-minded organisations in Poplar, Bow, Limehouse and Mile End have come together to create the Well One Partnership.

The partnership works as a network to give residents access to health and wellbeing related activities. Focusing on increasing physical activity, good food, and community connectivity, the partnership aims improve access to these through engaging campaigns and the dedicated Well One website.

The website will operate as a directory and menu of local activities within the community.

Play Campaign with Well One Partnership

The Play Campaign hopes to inspire families to play more by making play opportunities more accessible and easier to find.

To launch the campaign, Well One has organised a series of free interactive workshops that will be delivered in community centres as well as online. The workshops will be supplemented with some stimulating, play-inspired resources to take home.



There are also play packs available containing full inspirational play ideas for the whole family. The packs are available for collection upon request or available at the website below.

For more details, email info@wellone.co.uk or visit www.wellone.co.uk



Tower Hamlets Council launches campaign to highlight local mental health offer for young people

Visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/recharge to explore the range of mental health tools, services and support available for young people who live, study or have a doctor in Tower Hamlets.

can also use Kooth – the free, safe, friendly and anonymous online mental wellbeing community.

For urgent support, freephone 0800 073 0003 – lines are open all day, every day.

Children and young people aged 11 to 25 years

Resources for professionals who work with children and young people

The council, working with local young people, Kooth, Spotlight and Young Creators UK, have created new original content to signpost the wide range of mental health tools, services and support available locally for young people.

Professionals working with children and young people can access a downloadable communications toolkit,

including posters and social media content, to help raise awareness of the services.

There are also lesson plans available for youth and education settings to help frame discussions and plan activities around mental health.

The aim is to support young people to develop their vocabulary about how they are feeling so that they are better equipped to talk about their mental health.

To receive the communications toolkit email david.harding@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

World Mental Health Day – 10 October

The theme for this year is 'Mental health for all'. To find out more, click [here](#).



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.

Autumn programmes (Sept-Dec 2021)

Programmes are delivered by the Parenting Team and take place in schools, community centres and on online.

Programme	Age range	Information
Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC)	2 - 18 years	Aims to increase parental self-esteem and confidence and reduce child behavioural difficulties. Five sessions, shortened version adapted for online. Also available in Bengali and Somali. Evening programme in English.
Triple P Teen	12 - 18 years	For parents to foster positive relationships with their teenager or for those who have concerns about problem behaviour, non-cooperation and aggression or wish to prevent behavioural problems from developing. Eight sessions.
Triple P Group	18 months - 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. Eight sessions.
Triple P Family Transitions	Birth - 18 years	NEW for 2021. For parents who are experiencing personal distress after separation or divorce, which is impacting on their parenting. Eight sessions.
Triple P Online	18 months - 11 years and 12 - 18 years	An individual online programme for parents to access and complete at their own pace. Practitioner support and guidance to complete the programme is available on request.
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. Six sessions.
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.
The Parent Factor in ADHD	5 - 18 years	A programme for parents with children 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.

Parenting one-off discussion groups

The Triple P discussion group series cover a range of topics and parenting concerns.

For parents of children aged 2-11 years

- Encouraging Positive Behaviour
- Managing Fighting and Aggression

For parents of children aged 12-18 years

- Dealing with Emotional Behaviour
- Reducing Family Conflict

Get in touch

The parenting team look forward to receiving enquires from parents, carers, social care colleagues, school staff and other agencies in the borough.

To talk to a parenting practitioner for advice, to book a place or to make a professional referral contact the Tower Hamlets Parenting Team: **Email: parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk Tel: 020 7364 6398**

Speakeasy programme

At puberty, children go through many changes – both physical and emotional. It's important that children are well informed, but how do we have these conversations?



The Speakeasy programme has been developed to help parents to feel confident talking to their child about growing up. The programme builds on what parents already know and offers ideas on how to have these kinds of discussions.

Parents from **Canon Barnett Primary School** completed the Speakeasy course in July. The course, delivered by the Parental Engagement Team, used discussion and practical activities to explore:

- the physical and emotional changes taking place at puberty
- the influence on children from media and peers
- how relationship and sex education Relationship Sex Education (RSE) is taught in schools
- local support services for families

For more information about Speakeasy or to book a course in your school, email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

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Speakeasy isn't just about the RSE curriculum – it's a really useful course that helps families build on the conversations they may already be having with their child.

Shabana Begum
Parental Engagement Team

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Parenting programmes briefing – advice and support for professionals

These informal sessions provide an overview of parenting programmes and the advice and support available to parents and carers from the Tower Hamlets Parenting Team.

Briefing sessions provide information about programme content, who is eligible to attend and how to make a referral.

The sessions include tips for engaging parents, maintaining regular attendance and how professionals and parents can work together to get the most out of a parenting programme.

There are also opportunities to share practice and get peer support.

Sessions are open to social workers, early help practitioners and children and family workers considering parenting programmes and support options for parents and carers.

Sessions are also open to community partners.

For further information and to book a place see information and training for professionals on page 29.

New Parenting Support Network

Parenting can be extremely rewarding but can also have its challenges. The Parenting Support Network is great way to meet other parents for practical and emotional support.

The network is for parents who have completed a Triple P or Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) parenting programme or a parenting intervention with Parent and Family Support Service in Tower Hamlets and want to continue to develop and share parenting strategies and expand their network of support. The Parenting Network meets each half term, approximately every six weeks and includes a group for parents of teenagers.

For more information on how to join the network email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Screen time: how much is too much?

There is no doubt that children and young people have spent more time online during the pandemic, but what is a safe amount of screen time? A recent report from the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health has not found any compelling evidence that screen time is harmful – so it seems there's no definitive line on what is safe. There are, however, some key points that parents you work with should consider.

5 things parents should know about screen time

1. Not all screen time is the same

Not all online activities are equal: doing something creative or learning new skills is very different from mindless scrolling on social media. If there are benefits to the activity and it isn't interfering with school work or having an effect on their mood, there's probably no need to panic.



2. Set limits

Most parents will want to set some kind of limit. Around one to two hours daily during the week and a bit longer at the weekends is considered about right for teens. After that the benefits gradually taper off and the negative effects increase.



Younger children, aged four-seven years, should probably spend no more than an hour a day online – this can go up to



around an hour and a half as they get older.

3. Boundaries work if you stick to them

Get children involved in the process so that they understand why setting limits is important. Once you've agreed the limits, stick to them, but bear in mind that teens might need to spend longer online to complete their homework.



4. Look out for negative effects

Keep an eye on how children's screen time may be affecting other areas of their life. If they're spending time with friends and getting enough sleep and exercise, then it's likely that they already have a healthy balance.



Talk to children about what they're doing online and get them to think about how it makes them feel. They may actually agree that staying up late gaming is making them too tired for school, or admit that scrolling through social media is starting to affect their self-esteem.

5. Have family screen time together

Although it is good to set aside time when the family is not using screens, this doesn't mean that parents can't get involved in using screens with their children. If parents take an interest in what their children like to do online, children are more likely to ask for guidance if something goes wrong, or they make a mistake along the way.



New digital safety programme for parents

The internet can be a wonderful place for children and young people to learn, spend time with friends, and have fun. Sadly, there are also risks. Children may be exposed to harmful things that can have a negative impact on their lives.



The Parental Engagement Team have developed a new programme of digital support for parents so they can support their child to use the internet safely.

The programme is available free to schools to increase parents' awareness of their child's online world. The workshops provide parents with age-appropriate tips and practical advice for using technology safely and will keep them updated on the ever-changing world of social media.

The workshops will explore key concerns around internet safety including gaming, online grooming, cyber bullying and sexual exploitation.

What's on offer:

- Access to the 'Understanding Your Child's Online World' workshops for parents
- One-to-one family support interventions (via referral)
- Access to parenting programme discussion group for further parenting support

For more details email

denise.de-goze@towerhamlets.gov.uk



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Requests from parents and schools for help and advice are increasing. This updated programme will increase parents' understanding and confidence to keep children safe online, while the additional parenting support will help them to introduce boundaries, promote positive behaviour and reduce screen time.

Denise De-Goze
Schools and Families Team Manager

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TikTok guide for parents

TikTok is a hugely popular app that allows you to create, share and watch videos, of yourself. Although the app has a recommended age guide of 13+, it tends to be popular with even younger children because of appealing features like the ability to add filters, emojis and stickers. But there have been concerns about online predators who can comment and download other users' material if their profile is set to public. Although most of the material on the app is light-hearted, there have been occasions where inappropriate material has been uploaded, leading to worries that material is not being monitored sufficiently.

Internet Matters have produced a useful guide for parents detailing everything they need to know about the app, from safety features to areas of concerns, and how to report inappropriate content. View the guide [here](#).





Let's talk about keeping your child safe online

Platform to Talk, discussion-based sessions from the Parental Engagement Team, have been an invaluable source of support for parents during the pandemic. The virtual sessions were originally conceived in response to the national lockdown and the isolation many parents were experiencing as they struggled to adjust to the new conditions of family life. The sessions gave parents a safe space to share their experiences, connect with other parents and get reliable advice at a time when there was so much misinformation.

The sessions have been extremely popular with parents so will continue into the new academic year. We would like to hear your ideas for future themes and topics.

The theme for September is internet safety – the session will explore practical ways parents can keep their children safe online.

**Platform to Talk:
Keeping Your Child Safe Online
Friday 10 September
10am-11am
Delivered online through Zoom**

Book your place [here](#).

For more details or to suggest themes for future sessions, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk.



Mellow Parenting at Toyhouse

Toyhouse is a Tower Hamlets-based charity that has been supporting families and encouraging attachment between parents and children through the medium of play for over 40 years. They also have been successfully running a unique parenting programme called Mellow Parenting.

Unlike most parenting programmes, it includes pre-school children and features groups for both parents and children.

The intensive programme takes place over 14 weeks – once a week for five hours. It provides a safe space for parents to reflect on their own childhood and how they were parented. There are also opportunities to consider common parenting challenges and practical strategies that can be used to deal with them.

Social interaction is a key feature of the course. For example, lunchtime is an opportunity for parents, children and staff to come together and share a freshly cooked meal together. This is followed by a playful group activity, after which parents can take home a 'have a go' sheet to record ways they've tackled challenges during the week.

On completing the course, parents have a greater understanding of personal trauma, enhanced parenting skills, and reduced Social Care involvement.

Toyhouse is now accepting referrals for their autumn programme. For more details call **020 7987 7399**.

Hard Calls Save Lives

Although 90 lives were taken in 2019 through knife crime – one every four days – people often feel they can't tell police what they know, mainly through fear.

The Hard Calls Save Lives campaign aims to encourage the public instead to speak to independent charity, Crimestoppers, safe in the knowledge that they will remain completely anonymous. Crimestoppers will never ask for or note down any personal details. They do not record telephone calls and can not identify your telephone number or IP address if you are reporting online. The information you give, no matter how small, will be passed on anonymously to the police.

The campaign, which ran from September 2020 to May 2021, featured five mothers who lost their sons to knife crime. During the campaign, Crimestoppers saw an increase of 9.5% in anonymous knife crime reporting – a total of 517 calls were made and 367 online reporting forms were submitted to the campaign's website during that time.

Calling with information on knife crime can be a hard thing to do, but the details you give, however small, can help build a picture of criminal offences, and make a difference in keeping your community safe and even help save lives. Whether the information is something you've heard first-hand or from someone else, it's all useful information, which can be investigated and validated.

You know your area and if things don't feel right to you, they probably aren't. There are many things you could see that may be connected to knife crime.

- Do you know anyone in your area that carries a knife, or where a weapon is hidden?
- Are cars arriving at unusual times of day?
- Are drug deals taking place? If so, where are they taking place?

To give information on knife crime, call Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111**. It could save a life.



World Suicide Prevention Day

It's World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September and this year's theme is 'Creating hope through action'. It is endorsed by the World Health Organisation and is a way of focusing attention on the issue of suicide worldwide. It is hoped the day will raise awareness, create a movement of preventative action to drive behaviour change and ultimately prevent more suicides.

As part of the campaign, people from all around the world are invited to light a candle at 8pm on 10 September. This simple act will serve as a form of remembrance for those lost to suicide as well as demonstrate support for suicide prevention and survivors of suicide worldwide.



Free domestic abuse awareness training

Domestic abuse is under-reported and often a hidden crime. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns not only caused stress and anxiety but also increased incidents of domestic abuse. Abuse and violence are never acceptable, no matter what the circumstances. If someone is abusing you, it is their choice and it cannot be excused because of the pandemic.

Help is available for survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

To find out more, click [here](#).

To find out about free domestic abuse awareness training opportunities for your organisation, contact

Email: serita.myers@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tel: **020 7364 6211**.

Small Talk Saves Lives

Small Talk Saves Lives is a campaign to empower the public to act to prevent suicide on the railways and other settings. Suicide is preventable and suicidal thoughts are often temporary and can be interrupted.

The campaign, which was launched by the Samaritans in conjunction with Network Rail, aims

to give people the skills to notice if someone might be at risk and to give them the confidence to make an approach. A simple question or observation can be all it takes to interrupt suicidal thoughts and start the journey to recovery.

For advice on how to start a conversation with someone who may be at risk, click [here](#).

Unmasking stalking

Stalking is a pattern of persistent unwanted behaviour that is intrusive and frightening. It is when one person becomes fixated or obsessed with another and the attention is unwanted.

There have been concerns that there has been a substantial rise in stalking since the pandemic began. The Unmasking Stalking report shows that for those whose experience of stalking started before the first lockdown, half of the respondents (49%) confirmed an increase in online behaviours throughout the pandemic, while a third (32%) also saw a rise in offline behaviours.

The report demonstrates a rise in the frequency and intensity of online stalking. The most common are via social media and texting but stalkers are

also taking advantage of new technologies, such as tracking devices, apps and digital doorbells. Sending of unwanted letters and gifts are cited as common offline behaviours, showing how perpetrators adapted to social distancing restrictions and lockdowns during the pandemic.

The study shows that 60% of victims said they have no legal protections in place, and only a third (34%) said their case was brought to court. Victims complained that police often didn't recognise what they described as stalking, did not understand the nature of stalking or that their complaint was not taken seriously or acted upon.

View the 'Unmasking Stalking' report [here](#).

Online group for female survivors of violence is open for referrals

'Moving Forward' is an online psychoeducation group for female survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence run by Women and Girls Network as part of the Ascent Consortium.

The group is for women aged 16 plus who live in one of nine London boroughs including Tower Hamlets.

This series of eight sessions provides a space to talk, listen and be heard in an emotionally supportive and safe environment.

It gives women an opportunity to share experiences and information with other survivors, and to explore and understand the impact of gendered violence.

Practical exercises can help survivors create healthy boundaries and relationships, and improve their self-care.

For more information, referral form and criteria, click [here](#).

Email: groups@wgn.org.uk
Tel: **020 7610 4678**



Reporting Stalking

Call **999** if you or someone else is in immediate danger. Contact your local police if it's not an emergency.

Support

National Stalking Helpline
0808 802 0300

Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service

Protection Against Stalking

Victim and Witness Information website

Report abuse in education helpline

The NSPCC has launched a dedicated helpline for children and young people who have experienced abuse at school. The helpline is also available for worried adults or professionals that may need support and guidance around issues related to abuse in education, including non-recent abuse.

For more details: Email: help@nspcc.org.uk Tel: **0800 136 663**

SEND workshops for parents

Education, Health and Care Plan Workshop

The Tower Hamlets and City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) are offering an in-person workshop for parents to provide key information about the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process.

The workshop will explore what an EHCP is, its purpose and the process involved. It will also look at the elements of a good EHCP.

Education, Health and Care Plan Workshop

Friday 8 October

10am - 1pm

Parents Advice Centre

30 Greatorex Street, London E1 5NP

Annual Review Workshop

The Tower Hamlets & City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) are running an in-person workshop for parents to discuss key issues about an Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) Annual Review. The workshop will explore what should happen before, during and after the review. There will also be some useful information on how to ensure a child's EHCP is ready for transferring to secondary school.

Annual Review Workshop

Friday 22 October

10am - 12pm

Parents Advice Centre

30 Greatorex Street, London E1 5NP

For more information or to book your place

Email: towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk Tel: 020 7364 6489



Tower Hamlets and City
SEND IASS



SEND Support Group

- Come and meet other parents
- Share information
- Younger children welcome
- Monthly guest speakers

We meet every Thursday
morning **10am-12noon**
at Tower Hamlets &
City SEND IASS



The Local Offer's fresh new look

The Local Offer is your online resource providing up-to-date information on the services, support and activities available in Tower Hamlets, as well as the latest advice.

The website has recently been relaunched with a new look and improved search function. Anyone can use it but it is aimed at young people aged 0 to 25-years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and families in Tower Hamlets. You can find:

- Information and services for children with SEND
- Childcare
- Leisure activities for children and families
- Information and help with parenting or family support
- Information if you are considering childminding or working in a nursery
- Services and networks for parents and carers

Visit www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk

If you are not able to access the internet, or have a question, you can call the Family Information Officers on **020 7364 6495** from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.



Tower Hamlets Young People Zone

The Tower Hamlets Young People Zone is now available on Tower Hamlets Local Offer as a separate site dedicated to young people aged 14 to 25 with SEND. The site is packed full of useful information, from employment opportunities to health and relationships, and much more.

To get involved, visit www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/young_peoples_zone

Email: local.offer@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: **020 7364 6495**

Follow on Twitter [@OurTimeYF](https://twitter.com/OurTimeYF)
[@YoungPeopleAmb1](https://twitter.com/YoungPeopleAmb1)



Pandemic put more financial pressure on poorer households

The pandemic has placed more financial pressures on poorer households with the cost of extra food, energy, and remote learning having had a greater impact on low-income families, a study has shown.

The study from the University of York discovered that while higher income families may have saved money, the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns made it more expensive to live for those on a low income with children.

The findings included:

- Parents identified that having children at home 24 hours a day led to higher food and energy bills, while the need

to entertain them during the lockdowns also brought additional costs.

- There were additional costs associated with home-schooling, such as acquiring laptops, paying for internet access and obtaining additional study materials.
- Families found that the cost of buying food had risen due to the reduction of in store promotions. Families without a car and who needed to avoid public transport during the pandemic had to use more expensive shops closer to home.

For more details, click [here](#).



The Tower Hamlets Financial and Benefits Advice Service can support residents with advice on benefits, Universal Credit, rent, council tax, financial debts and other needs.

For more information visit the Tower Hamlets [website](#).

Cooking on a budget

Rising food costs, together with the financial implications of the pandemic, means that even more are struggling to provide healthy food for their families. Follow these money saving tips devised by the Parental Engagement Team and eat well for less.

Cook from scratch

Making meals from scratch is a lot cheaper and healthier than buying ready-made meals, which often have high levels of salt, sugar and fat.



Buy own-brands

The quality of own-brand products is generally the same as the more popular brands. By switching to own-brand products, you will save money.



Buy less meat

Try going meat-free at least one day a week. Reduce the amount of meat in your dishes by adding beans, lentils, tofu or vegetables.



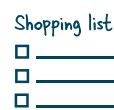
Buy and cook in bulk

Buy larger quantities of foods like rice and pasta – it saves time and money. Bulk cook meals such as stews, soups and sauces and freeze them for later.



Plan your meals in advance

Make a shopping list and try to stick to it. If you plan your meals for the whole week, you will waste less food and save money.



Buy frozen fruits and vegetables

It's often a lot cheaper to buy frozen fruits and vegetables. They contain the same nutrients as fresh ones, need no preparation and last longer.



Healthy Start scheme – check your eligibility



Did you know you may be entitled to help towards the costs of essential food? The council's Tackling Poverty Team estimate that around 2,300 families are not claiming Healthy Start vouchers even though they are eligible.

The scheme gives eligible families free vouchers to spend on food and milk which can be spent in all major supermarkets,

local shops and market stalls in Tower Hamlets.

What you get

- £8.50 per week for each baby under 12 months old
- £4.25 per week for each child aged between 1 and 3 years old
- £4.25 per week if you are pregnant (from week 10)

Vitamin supplements

Women and children receiving Healthy Start can also get free Healthy Start vitamins. These are crucial vitamins specifically designed for pregnant and breastfeeding women and growing children.

For more details and to check your eligibility visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk.

Support with the weekly family food shop

Family Action has launched Food On Our Doorstep (FOOD) clubs in Tower Hamlets to provide good quality food at a low cost, while also reducing food waste. It costs just £1 a year for a family to become a member. Once you've joined, you can purchase a bag of tasty food items every week worth approximately £10-£15 for just £3.50. The scheme is currently accepting new members, but you must live or work within approximately 15 minutes of one of the following clubs:

- Fieldgate Mansions, Romford Street, E1 1HX
- Cyprus Street Estate Office, E2 0PD

For more details, click [here](#).



Hundreds of activities and new playground equipment add up to a 'Summer of Fun'

It has been a bumper summer of fun, as people of all ages and backgrounds took part in an action-packed programme of more than 200 online and face-to-face summer activities, including adventure play, football, wildlife exploration, climbing, barbecues and more – all of which were hosted by the council and partner organisations.

By early August, council park rangers had welcomed more than 2,571 young people to over 52 activities in the borough's parks and open spaces.

Week one of a free 'try athletics' camp, hosted by the council's sports teams at the end of July, saw up to 100 young people per day take part in athletic disciplines such as endurance running, sprints, throws and jumps.

Partner organisations including social housing landlords, youth clubs and city farms also hosted activities in partnership with the council.

Amongst other activities, youth and community organisation, Osmani Trust, delivered a six-day-a-week Kick Back programme, offering sports, day trips and workshops.

During the school holidays, families and children flocked to new play facilities including Weavers Field Adventure playground, a new 'castle' piece of play equipment at Mile End Park children's playground and a new fully inclusive adventure playground and community space at Whitehorse Adventure playground.



Games at Osmani Youth Centre



A new 'castle' piece of play equipment at Mile End Children's Park

“

What a brilliant event – everyone was friendly and made to feel welcome. It was very well organised and fun for all the kids. Staff were very friendly and helpful. We will definitely come back.

Parent who joined in a cooking session with their children at Mudchute Farm

”



Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme – ‘Summer of Play’

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme took place at St Mary & St Michael Primary School this summer. Although COVID restrictions have now eased, the scheme decided to continue to operate under COVID-19 risk assessment so as to keep everyone safe. The children were placed into groups.

On 4 August, the scheme joined children and adults across the UK to celebrate **Playday 2021**. The 2021 theme, ‘Summer of Play’, recognises the challenges children and young people have faced over the past year and the need to enjoy time for playing with their friends.

To celebrate, children took part in our very own Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme Olympics. Children took part in various sporting and athletic challenges, ranging from relay races, shot put throwing, javelin, target tennis, ball toss and much more. The children were involved in discussions on why play is important to them. To see highlights of the summer scheme activities, click [here](#).

Weekly activity themes:

- Week one: The environment
- Week two: The Olympics
- Week three: Virtual circus
- Week four: Superheroes

Need childcare for October half term?

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme is Ofsted registered and provides childcare for children aged 3 to 13 years old. It continues to support families who may need the scheme the most. Places are provided for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable referrals from children’s social care, schools and other partner agencies.

For details on how to book a place for the October half term scheme (25-29 October), visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs

Do you want to help others in your local community?

Global Learning London has produced a resource with helpful tips for parents and carers on how to be an active citizen. It explores what this means to help others in your local community and also identifies lots of opportunities to support and connect with local organisations, people and initiatives.

Three themes are addressed in detail – Climate Change, Consumer Choices and Community Connections – all at a personal level, locally and through global interconnections.

The resource also encourages parents to connect to their community and become active citizens by joining the borough’s **Parent and Carer Council** or becoming a **school governor**.

It was commissioned by the council’s Strategy, Policy and Performance Team and can be found on the Global Learning London [website](#).



'Anatomix graffiti, Tower Hamlets Cemetery' by duncan is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Call for Tower Hamlets volunteers to support children with reading this September

Children's literacy charity, Bookmark, is bringing its one-to-one reading programmes to primary schools in Tower Hamlets and is calling for volunteers to support local children with reading as we start this crucial new school year.

Helping a child to learn to read is hugely rewarding and there's never been a better time to get involved.

Bookmark programmes are designed to fit around volunteers' schedules. Volunteers can visit local schools for reading sessions, or, if volunteering online suits them better, it can all be done from a home computer or laptop. Each reading programme involves two 30-minute sessions a week, for six weeks, with a child aged five to nine.

Volunteers receive full training and support and can select their session times to fit their schedule, using the Bookmark app.

Bookmark is recruiting volunteers now to read with children this September. To find out more, visit www.bookmarkreading.org/volunteer



Dads play event at Rich Mix

As restrictions began to lift across the country and some face-to-face events returned, Rich Mix in Shoreditch hosted a very special event to mark Father's Day 2021.

The dads play event, for local fathers, male carers and their children, was organised by Rich Mix in partnership with the Parental Engagement Team.

They worked closely together to devise a range of open-ended activities that would appeal to dads and children of all ages. Activities included pot decorating, healthy dip making, Father's Day card making and scraper-board art.

The event provided a much needed space for families to come together, have fun and share experiences after a challenging period.

The Tower Hamlets Dads' Network supports and encourages dads and male carers to strengthen relationships with their children through positive parenting and play. There are also opportunities to share experiences about parenting and families with other dads.

To join the Dads' Network, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk



“

After so much time in isolation, it was great to see the children having fun together again and to meet other dads.

Dad

”

Family Learning Festival 2021 16 – 30 October

Learning as a family can help us to become confident, lifelong learners with all the benefits that brings – from better health to being happier. Family learning supports children to achieve at school. It can be transformative, helping us to find new passions and interests, and realise our aspirations through further learning.

The Family Learning Festival is a national celebration to inspire a love of learning in family life. It takes place in October every year and is co-ordinated by the Campaign for Learning.

The theme of this year's festival is 'Play, Imagine, Learn' and organisations such as schools, children's centres, libraries and museums will be putting on creative events to showcase family learning.

To find out more, visit www.familylearningfestival.com



Training and events calendar

Parental engagement/participation dates and events for parents

Date/time	Description
Fridays 10 September 8 October 12 November 10 December 14 January 10am - 11.30am	Platform to Talk Virtual Workshops The virtual sessions cover a range of topical issues from health and wellbeing to family life, parenting, school and more. The September workshop will explore Keeping Your Child Safe Online. To book your place, click here .
Saturday 16 October 10.30am -12.45pm	Parent and Carer Council Virtual Meeting The borough's main family forum and key consultation vehicle to support borough-wide consultation with parents and carers. To book your place, click here . Email: parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tuesdays 5 October 9 November 7 December 11 January 11am - 1pm	Somali Parents and Carers Network Virtual Meetings The 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. To book your place, click here . Email: parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Every Thursday Term time only 10am - 12pm	SEND Parent Support Group The group offers parents and carers of children or young people with additional needs/disabilities support and information around key themes/relevant issues and an opportunity to meet other parents and carers of children with SEND. To find out more email: TowerHamletsCity.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk

For more information contact the Parental Engagement Team on **020 7364 6398**
 or email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Parental engagement information and training for professionals

Date/time	Description
Monday 13 September Wednesday 24 November 10am - 11.30am	Parental Engagement – Professionals Network Meeting (delivered virtually) The Parental Engagement Network provides an opportunity for all staff working with parents in school to share experiences and strategies to better engage parents in their child's learning, development and school life. The Network meetings include key themes and topics, local and national updates to support your work. To book your place, email parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tuesdays 14 September 12 October 16 November 11.30am -12.30pm	Parenting Programmes – Advice and Support Sessions for Professionals (delivered virtually) The sessions provide an overview of parenting programmes and the advice and support available to parents and carers from the Tower Hamlets Parenting Team. Sessions are currently delivered via MS Teams. All places need to be booked via the LBTH Learning Hub, click here . Sessions are also open to community partners. For more information email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tuesday 21 September 2pm - 3.30pm	Parenting Exchange (delivered virtually) The Parenting Exchange Group meet once a term to bring together different organisations and practitioners in Tower Hamlets. Group members contribute to the development and mapping of parenting programmes and an information sharing network. If you are interested in being part of this group please email your name, role and organisation to parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk

For more information or to book a place,
 Email: parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk Tel: **020 7364 6398**
 All places will be confirmed one week before the course/session.
 Late or no notice of cancellation may result in a charge to your school or setting.

Useful contacts

The Tackling Poverty Team have pulled together some contacts to support your work with families.

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE ADVICE	EMAIL
Account 3	020 7739 7720	admin@account3.org.uk
Age UK	020 8981 7124	info@ageukeastlondon.org.uk
Apasen	020 7001 2266	syeda.ara@apasen.org.uk
Bromley by Bow Centre	020 8709 9757 020 8709 9745	advice@bbbc.org.uk
Carers Centre Tower Hamlets	020 7709 1765	enquiries@ccth.org.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau	0203 855 4472	advice@eastendcab.org.uk
DeafPlus	077 4570 8878 (Text only)	aiysha.begum@deafplus.org
Fair Finance	020 3475 8811	info@fairmoneyadvice.co.uk
Financial Health Centre	020 7364 2200	fhc@thh.org.uk
Island Advice Centre	020 7987 9379	admin@island-advice.org.uk
Legal Advice Centre	020 3606 0372	admin@legaladvicecentre.london
Limehouse Project	020 7538 0075	info@limehouseproject.org.uk
Mind in Tower Hamlets and Newham	020 7510 1081	info@mithn.org.uk
Ocean Somali Community Centre	020 7749 7608 (Wednesday 2 - 4pm) 020 7749 7605 (Thursday 10am - 12.30pm)	abdi@oceansomali.org.uk
Praxis (support and advice for migrants and refugees)		admin@praxis.org.uk
Positive East	020 7791 2855	talktome@positiveeast.org.uk
St Hildas	020 7739 8066 (Monday to Thursday, 10am - 2pm)	alaya@sthildas.org.uk
St Peter	020 7729 1036	stpetersba@live.co.uk
Stifford Centre	020 7790 3632	info@stifford.org.uk
Tower Hamlets Law Centre	020 7538 4909	info@thlc.co.uk
Tower Hamlets Resident Support Outreach Service	020 7364 7010	LBTHResidentSupport@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Toynbee	020 7392 2953	advice@toynbeehall.org.uk

Your guide to information and services for families in Tower Hamlets

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 [@thlocaloffer](https://twitter.com/thlocaloffer)  localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk



Guide to information and services in Tower Hamlets for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and **all** families in the borough

