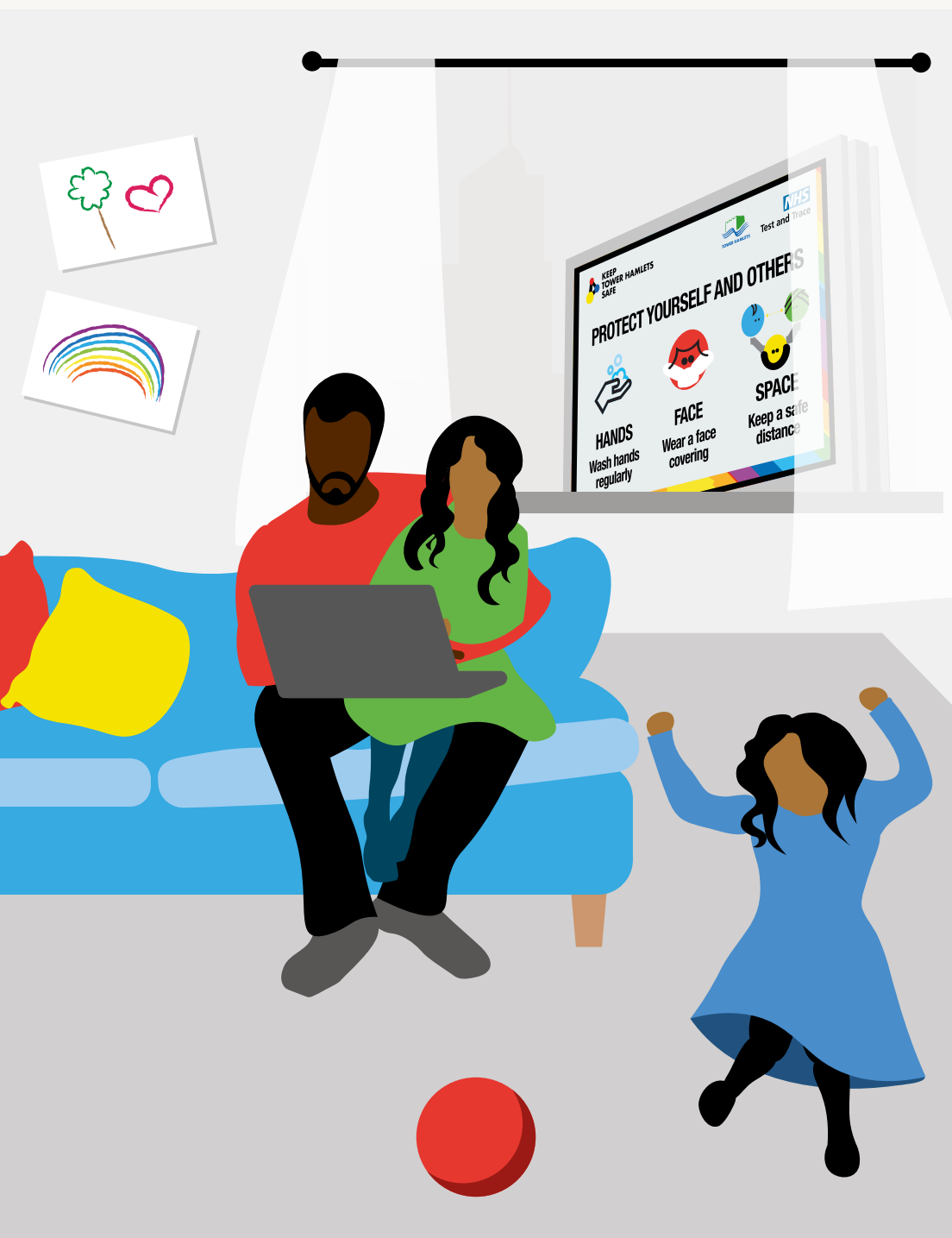


# Families Matter

A magazine full of news and information to support your work with families



## Putting families first

We've been working to support families during 2020, including:

- Helping parents to support their children with blended learning at home and school
- Providing parenting advice, including evening and weekends support for parents in need
- Tackling food insecurity
- Supporting shielding families with serious health conditions
- Encouraging play during lockdown linked to our work to promote the importance of play with the launch of the Play Charter (see pages 10-17).

We will continue to help families adjust and build resilience to the 'new normal'.

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport)

## INSIDE

2-9 Parental Engagement Team  
 10-17 Play  
 18-21 Early Years and School  
 22-28 Parent Support and Safeguarding

29-30  
 31-34  
 35-36  
 37

Health and Wellbeing  
 Parent Voice  
 Community  
 Useful Contacts

## Welcome to the spring edition of Families Matter

Over the past year, we have all had to adapt in the face of the pandemic and the changes we made were not something we could have easily prepared or planned for. It has been a steep learning curve and as we got to grips with lockdown, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and virtual meetings, it was amazing to see how much families and professionals could adapt.

The Parent and Family Support Service worked hard so services could be delivered safely and online while maintaining telephone support and advice for families. The Holiday Childcare Scheme was still running and parent groups including the Somali Network, SEND Ambassadors and the Parent and Carer Council moved meetings online. We also launched a monthly Families Matter Bitesize E-bulletin.

As we start the new year, we will continue with our online activities and provide many opportunities for parents to come together, share experiences and access information, which in turn supports their children.

This edition is packed with information and dates for your diary, so sign up for one of the parenting courses and learn something new or join an online parent group to share experiences in 2021.

Best wishes,  
**Jill McGinley**  
 Head of Parent and Family Support Service

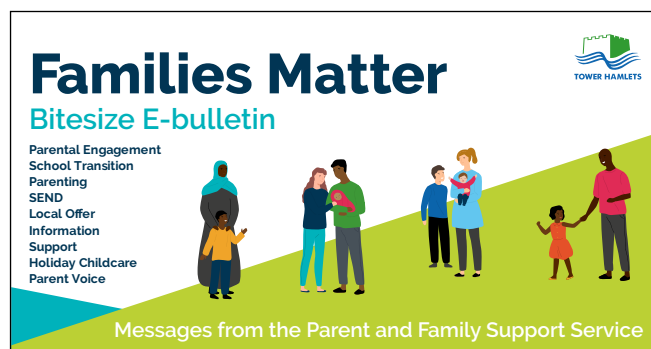
## Working with families?

Join the Parental Engagement Team's network mailing list

If you work with families in the borough, sign up to the Parental Engagement Team's network mailing list to receive the latest news and information. Encourage your colleagues to sign up too. Email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Families Matter Bitesize E-bulletin

In addition to our termly magazine, we publish a monthly e-bulletin which provides regular updates, information, advice and support for parents in Tower Hamlets. Parents can sign up via the council's resident subscriber list by choosing 'children and education' as their preferred topic after closing the initial pop-up box and completing the form on the sign up page at [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/signup](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/signup)



“

**The Parent and Family Support Service's advice is really on point and easy for parents to access and understand. They provide a fantastic service and are dedicated to ensuring our children and families get the best deal.**

Dawn Pritchard, Assistant Headteacher and SENCO, Shapla Primary School

”

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 magazine contact

**Fiona Stokes**

Tel: **020 7364 6049**

Email: [fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto: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, sibling or other family members.*

*References to 'SEND' as used in some articles is the abbreviation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.*

# Parent and Family Support Service

We provide relevant up-to-date information and support to help parents in Tower Hamlets to feel more confident in their role as parents, have the knowledge and confidence to support their child's learning and have sufficient emotional resilience, skills and capacity to provide warm, responsive and safe parenting. We do this by providing early intervention, prevention and targeted support within schools, early years settings and the wider community.

Just as we were about to hold our annual parent conference last March, the country went into lockdown. We informed the 180 parents who booked that the conference would not be taking place. It was a very sad day.

Since then we have adapted our services, launched the Families Matter Bitesize E-bulletin, developed an online parenting support offer and established a virtual online network through the Parent Carer Council, SEND Ambassadors, Somali Network and schools' 'Let's Talk/Platform to Talk' activities to ensure parents continue to have the information and support they need.

## The Parent and Family Support Service includes:

- Parental Engagement Team
- SEND Information, Advice and Support (SEND IAS)
- Parenting, Schools and Families
- Transition Service
- Family Information Service
- Local Offer
- Holiday Childcare Scheme

## Statistics for 2020

10,500+

Parents accessed Parent and Family Support Services



11,242

Calls received by the Family Information Service



46,695

User sessions recorded by the Local Offer



500

Play and activity bags were distributed to children who were shielding



342

Parents were referred to a parenting programme



130

Parents received one-to-one support based on evidence-based parenting strategies



168

Parents attended Healthy Families programmes



67

Parents attended the first virtual Parent and Carer Council meeting on Zoom



14

Dads and male carers attended the Dads' Network meeting on Zoom



352

New referrals received by SENDIAS Team to support families



410

Parents attended transition information sessions



787

Parents attended curriculum & information workshops



667

1-1 support school-based family support interventions took place



700

Children of working parents, key workers and vulnerable families were supported by the Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme



# An update from the Parental Engagement Schools and Families Team

Due to the pandemic, the team's mode of delivery had to change overnight and practitioners quickly developed new ways to support families. These included moving sessions online, developing a range of blended learning opportunities using Zoom for group and one-to-one sessions and implementing Covid-secure in person sessions for targeted families.

Schools and family practitioners also quickly put together resources and a list of recommended websites to support families with home learning. These were sent directly to schools as well as placed on the Local Offer website. The team worked closely with family support practitioners to identify areas where families needed support. They then developed a programme of online workshops.

## Supporting parents to navigate the new learning landscape

Sessions ranged from supporting children's learning in maths, reading and writing to navigating online learning.

Experienced practitioners guided parents through the process so that they felt confident accessing their child's online learning. Practitioners were also used as a source for reliable information given the amount of misinformation that is online – they provided families with safe websites they could use to support learning at home.



Since the information sessions for parents with children who would be starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage were no longer taking place, the team devised online sessions to prepare families. Parents really valued the opportunity to ask questions and to find out what to expect once their child started school and how to prepare their child over the holidays.

“

**It's been really useful listening to the advice about preparing my son for school. The team were so helpful and I learned a lot.**  
Parent

”

**55**  
online sessions from March to November

**441**  
parents attended

**100%**  
of parents said they found the sessions useful\*

**100%**  
of parents had a greater understanding of the topic as a result of attending\*

**100%**  
of parents discovered something new to try at home as a result of attending\*

\*of parents who completed an evaluation



# Your Digital Family

FACEBOOK  



## #YourDigitalFamily – join the fun

Does your family know its TikTok from its Twitter, Deliveroo from Discord or Bieber from Baby Shark?

The Parental Engagement Team have recently launched a fun new family quiz event which will test your family's tech knowledge.

The online quiz is suitable for parents and secondary school-aged children who can take part from the comfort of their own home.

All you need to join is an internet-enabled device, such as a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

**Friday 5 and 12 February, 7pm - 9pm, via Zoom**

### Prizes to be won!

For more details and to sign up  
**Email:** [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7364 6398

“

**Thank you all. It was honestly such a nice evening with kids to do this quiz.**

Parent

**Was great to be off the telly and have some fun with other families and meet some new people :)**

Parent

**I enjoyed this very much I hope we can do it again, it was fun debating with family and having an overall good time.**

Parent

**Great energy Parental Engagement Team!**

Parent

”

## Virtual parent sessions for 2021



Following a very successful programme of virtual sessions for parents in 2020, the Parental Engagement Team has launched a new schedule of sessions for 2021.

The sessions have proved to be an invaluable source of support for parents at a time when they may be struggling to navigate the new learning landscape. 100% of the parents who attended and completed an end of session evaluation said they would recommend the sessions to other parents.

The spring term timetable of parent sessions can be found on pages 6-7.

For information on the courses, upcoming dates and how to book visit the [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/blog\\_articles/2811-support-children-s-learning-with-free-virtual-sessions-for-parents](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/blog_articles/2811-support-children-s-learning-with-free-virtual-sessions-for-parents).

**Email:** [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
**Tel:** 020 7364 6398

# Parent sessions to support children's learning and wellbeing

The Parental Engagement Team has launched a new schedule of online sessions for 2021. The sessions have proved to be an invaluable source of support for parents at a time when they may be struggling to navigate the new learning landscape.

From information about new learning approaches including 'blended learning' to tips on supporting learning at home and staying healthy, the sessions provide a safe space for parents to share their experiences, ask questions and pick up some handy tips from experienced practitioners.

To accommodate parents who may be busy home-schooling or working, weekend and evening sessions are now being offered.

Date/time	Session	Description
Thursday 28 January 10 - 11am	Learning in the early years	In this workshop for parents of nursery and reception class children, you'll find out about the Early Years Foundation Stage and discover how you can use every day experiences to enhance your child's learning.
Monday 1 February 10 - 11am	Supporting your child's wellbeing and mental health	This is an uncertain time for everyone. Children are often more aware of what's going on than we think. They might not understand the news, but that doesn't mean they can't sense that something is up. You might not be sure how best to talk about what's going on, but it's important we pay attention to their mental health.
Friday 5 February 7 - 9pm	Digital Family Quiz #YourDigitalFamily	Does your family know its TikTok from its Twitter, Deliveroo from Discord or Bieber from Baby Shark? Take part in this fun family quiz night and test your family's tech knowledge. Suitable for parents and secondary school aged children. Prizes to be won!
Saturday 6 February 1 - 2.30pm	Support with online learning	This workshop, which is delivered through Zoom, will give you an opportunity to look at examples of school websites as well as on-line learning portals such as Google Classroom and Purple Mash, to name a few.
Monday 8 February 10 - 11am	Platform to Talk – keeping teens motivated to learn	With exams being cancelled, some young people are feeling there is little point to online lessons. This timely session for parents of secondary school children will explore what parents can do to motivate teens and help prepare them for their future.
Thursday 11 February 10 - 11am	E-safety and learning	With children learning at home, online safety has never been more important. This workshop looks at practical steps parents can take to safeguard children and explains the latest social media and gaming apps children may be using to communicate online.

Date/time	Session	Description
Friday 12 February 7 - 9pm	Digital Family Quiz #YourDigitalFamily	Does your family know its TikTok from its Twitter, Deliveroo from Discord or Bieber from Baby Shark? Take part in this fun family quiz night and test your family's tech knowledge. Suitable for parents and secondary school-aged children. Prizes to be won!
Monday 1 March 10 - 11am	Learning in the early years	In this workshop for parents of nursery and reception class children, you'll find out about the Early Years Foundation Stage and discover how you can use every day experiences to enhance your child's learning.
Tuesday 2 March 5 - 6pm	Mindfulness	Mindfulness is about developing awareness and being in the present moment. With the unpredictability of the current times we find ourselves in, children may be more anxious than usual. Join the session to pick up some useful strategies that may help to create a sense of calm.
Wednesday 3 March 5 - 6pm	Reading at Key Stage 2	Gain an insight into how reading is taught at school. Discover how to motivate reluctant readers and how you can support your child's reading development at home.
Friday 5 March 10 - 11am	Reading at Key Stage 1	Gain an insight into how reading is taught at school. Discover how to motivate reluctant readers and how you can support your child's reading development at home.
Thursday 4 March 6 - 7.30pm	E- safety and learning	With children learning at home, online safety has never been more important. This workshop looks at practical steps parents can take to safeguard children and explains the latest social media and gaming apps children may be using to communicate online
Wednesday 10 March 10 - 11am	Healthy Families	Is your family snacking too much or finding it difficult to be active? In this workshop, you'll have the chance to share your concerns, pick up some ideas for quick, easy meals and discover ways to get the family more active!
Wednesday 17 March 5 - 6pm	Maths at Key Stage 2	Gain an insight into what your child is learning in Maths at Key Stage 2 and discover how to use the internet and other tools to encourage mathematical thinking and motivate reluctant learners.
Friday 19 March 5 - 6pm	Maths at Key Stage 1	Gain an insight into what your child is learning in Maths at Key Stage 1 and discover how to use the internet and other tools to encourage mathematical thinking and motivate reluctant learners.

For more details or to join a session email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk) stating the session and date you would like to attend along with your school's name and child's age

# Parental engagement professionals network meeting

The parental engagement professionals network meeting provides those who work with parents in schools with an opportunity to network, consider the challenges when working with families and share best practice.

Recent meeting themes include 'keeping families informed – engaging parents during Covid-19' and discussions around supporting play during the pandemic with the launch of the new Tower Hamlets Play Charter.

Staff are given the chance to discuss how they are supporting families through school closures, financial hardship, food poverty and other challenges.

Staff agreed communication was key, and with information in the media changing daily, working in partnership with parents is crucial to ensure families engage with schools and children are kept safe.

Through the network, staff also receive Covid-19 updates from Katie Cole, Associate Director, Public Health and updates on the changes to SEND provision from Christine McInnes, Divisional Director, Education and Partnerships.

To view the date of the next

“

**Interesting and informative, thank you.**

Janice Hill Kocoglu  
Family Learning and Parental Engagement Coordinator  
Shadwell and St Katharine's Collaborative of Schools

”

meeting see the information and training for professionals timetable below.

For more information or to register your place

Email: [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

For ideas to promote play and information on the Play Charter which sets out the importance of play to children's learning and development see pages 10-17.

## Parent and Family Support Service – information and training for professionals

Date/time	Description
Wednesday 3 February 3 - 4.30pm	<b>Parenting Exchange (delivered virtually)</b> The Parental Engagement Team will facilitate a parenting exchange group to bring together different organisations in Tower Hamlets to explore current parenting provision and establish an information sharing network. If you are interested, please email your name, role and organisation to <a href="mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk">parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Wednesday 17 March 10am - 2.30pm	<b>Annual Parent and Carer Conference (delivered virtually via Zoom)</b> Save the date – further information on how to book places for parents will be available shortly.
Wednesday 12 May 10 - 11.30am	<b>Parental engagement professionals network meeting (delivered virtually)</b> Provides an opportunity for all staff working with parents in schools to network, consider the challenges when working with parents and share best practice.

For more information, charges or to book a place, contact Husna Begum.

Email: [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Tel: **020 7364 1952**

No course charge applies to schools/settings that have a Service Level Agreement with the Parent and Family Support Service for 2020-21.

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.



# 'Platform to Talk' virtual sessions for parents

Now more than ever parents need a safe space to come together, share their experiences and get reliable information.

That's why the Parental Engagement Team have recently launched regular 'Platform to Talk' sessions, led by experienced practitioners from the Schools and Families Team.

The virtual sessions will cover a range of topical issues, such as health and wellbeing, family life, parenting and school.

The first session was on the topic of 'Growing Up' with parents of children aged four to 17 years old. Parents shared their concerns that children were becoming more isolated and reliant on devices and their worries around home schooling and children falling behind in their learning.

Practitioners shared helpful advice on children's changing emotions as they grow up and strategies to encourage open and positive communication between parents and their children.



The next 'Platform to Talk' session for parents of secondary school children will be 'Keeping Teens Motivated to Learn'. With exams being cancelled, some young people are feeling there is little point to online lessons. This timely session will explore what parents can do to motivate teens and help prepare them for their future.

## Keeping Teens Motivated to Learn

**Monday 8 February**  
**10 - 11.30am**

**Future sessions**  
**Monday 8 March**  
**Monday 12 April**  
**10am - 11.30am**

“  
**I really enjoyed listening and talking to you all. I feel as though I am not alone in this. Some great advice. Thank you.**  
Parent

To find out more, book your place or suggest themes for future sessions email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Family fun resource to support learning, play and wellbeing

Children learn best through 'hands-on' experiences. Since they are spending more leisure and learning time online, it's important they have a break from 'screen time' to have fun and to explore real life materials. This is why the Parental Engagement Team have developed a series of family fun sheets which will be sent fortnightly to all primary schools in the borough. The sheets are packed full of creative ideas that will support learning, play and wellbeing. See page 10 for the first sheet in the series.

Keep an eye out for these resources in your school newsletter or you can request your own by emailing [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

# Family Fun!

Ideas to support learning, play and well-being

## Junk modelling

Don't throw waste packaging away - children can use it to create models! In these times where it may be difficult to access art materials, it's a great way to keep them busy while allowing them to create and innovate. You don't need to 'teach' them how to make something, instead allow them to explore the materials and let them come up with their own ideas. Encourage them to talk about their creations afterwards!



## Writing commands

Having lots of scrap paper and things like post-its around the house can really encourage children to write. Writing doesn't have to be in an exercise book - using unusual materials like post its can motivate even reluctant writers. Children need opportunities to do different types of writing- stories, instructions and commands. Encourage them to use post-its to write their own commands and place them all around the home. They could be commands like 'Take off your shoes' or 'Turn off the lights!'

## Rainbow breaths

Stand with your feet apart, arms resting by your side. Raise your arms and take a deep breath in. Breathe in until your hands reach each other over your head. Breathe out slowly while lowering the hands. Visualise the rainbow you are making. Each time you breathe in imagine you are adding another colour to your rainbow. Once your rainbow is done, open your eyes.



## Ditch the dip!

Ditch high fat dips like mayonnaise and create your own healthy alternative. Just mix some low-fat yoghurt together with a clove of finely chopped garlic and season with a little salt and pepper. Try it with some roughly chopped, crunchy vegetables- delicious!

Produced by  
The Parental Engagement  
Schools and Family Team



**FamiliesMatter**  
Subscribe to our e-bulletin  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport)



# Launch of new Play Charter

The new Tower Hamlets Play Charter was developed over many months with partners from across the borough. It sets out the partnership's vision for play in Tower Hamlets. It calls on residents, businesses, voluntary organisations and charities, providers of childcare and education, the council and developers to be imaginative and create initiatives, or build on existing projects, which embed play into the daily lives of our children and young people.

Play is fundamental to a child's development. It helps them to learn about the world around them, make friends, be healthy and have fun.

We hope you enjoy reading the Play Charter and will use its principles and commitments to create opportunities for play in the work of your organisation.

To view the Play Charter visit [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/documents/1402-tower-hamlets-play-charter.pdf](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/documents/1402-tower-hamlets-play-charter.pdf)

“  
**Play is fundamental to a child's development, helping them to learn about the world around them, make friends, be healthy and have fun.**

Play Charter

”

## The Play Charter has 5 principles

1

Prepared to learn

2

Learning through play

3

Inclusive play

4

Outdoor play

5

Play for all

## Play Charter working group

A Play Charter working group has been formed to support implementation of the charter and bring together different organisations from across Tower Hamlets who are passionate about play and what it has to offer children and families.

If you are interested in being part of this group, contact Jill McGinley  
 Email: [jill.mcginley@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:jill.mcginley@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**EVERY  
 CHANCE  
 for EVERY  
 CHILD**





# The importance of play

## An overview by the Holiday Childcare Team

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) lists 54 articles ([www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC\\_summary-1\\_1.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf)) covering all aspects of children's rights which all member states excluding the United States have accepted. In 1992 the convention was ratified by the United Kingdom.

### Article 31:

**Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.**

Tower Hamlets is supporting children's rights through the launch of our very first Play

Charter which was approved by the Children and Families Partnership Board in November. The Parent and Family Support Service will facilitate a play working group with leaders from the voluntary and the third sector who deliver play activities and services.

The Holiday Childcare Team is committed to play and the five principles listed in the Play Charter:

1. Prepared to play
2. Learning through play
3. Inclusive play
4. Outdoor play
5. Play for all

The Holiday Childcare Team has been crucial in ensuring that children have access to play

during Covid-19. Our holiday schemes have been open during the pandemic with rigorous risk assessments and COVID-secure measures in place.

In August we hosted a play day event for children who attend the summer scheme – children took part in an exciting sports day event. Usually we would have organised daily trips for children to gain new experiences, however, we adapted and instead offered virtual trips for children to explore places such as the Eiffel Tower, NASA, Mexico City and the Cincinnati Zoo.

Our scheme newsletters provide further information on how we promote play within the service and holiday schemes.



## Leading the way...

### Quality in Play

The Holiday Childcare Scheme underwent an accreditation process in 2020 to obtain Quality in Play status, which is awarded for demonstrating quality and value for money whilst creating and maintaining excellent staffed play environments.



Accreditation involves producing a portfolio of evidence covering 11 quality areas, ranging from the physical play environment to workforce development. Following an inspection of our February 2020 scheme, we were awarded a Certificate of Confirmation.

Mick Conway, Quality in Play Assessor, said: "The organisation of the portfolio was meticulous following the 'commitment, action, review' format for each quality area. I was particularly impressed by how children's feedback on previous schemes is built into forward planning and procurement of equipment, materials and trips out. For example, cooking and baking sessions had been introduced following requests from the children after a couple of trial sessions which were very popular. There is a specific focus on 'non-gendering' play activities across the scheme and I noted that a number of boys were very proud of the cushions they had made and sewed."

### Sanctuary Award

The scheme also received a Sanctuary Award, making it the first holiday club in the UK to be recognised in this way. The award from Sanctuary City UK recognises networks, groups and organisations which foster a welcoming and inclusive culture for people who are fleeing violence or persecution. The scheme has a long tradition of inclusive practice and we are pleased to be recognised as a leading holiday club on inclusive practice in the play sector.



### Millie's Mark

The scheme also achieved the Millie's Mark accreditation from National Day Nurseries Association.

Millie's Mark is awarded to nurseries, early years and childcare settings where:

- all staff members who work with children are qualified in paediatric first aid and have well-deployed first aid processes
- individual policies and procedures evidence exemplary practice
- providers go above and beyond minimum requirements by having 100% of staff trained

in paediatric first aid.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidelines, which childcare settings in England are required to follow, currently state that just one person with a current paediatric first aid certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present or on outings.





## Supporting children's play

Children play naturally as a way of learning about the world around them. Play is not wasted time – when children play, they are learning important skills. Parents and those working with children can give them a better start in life by providing more interesting and varied play in the early years.

- **Play is messy**  
Young children love to play with water, sand, paint
- **Play is sociable**  
Children learn to make friends and to work together
- **Play is good for health**  
Children exercise and develop control of their bodies which is important.

Support children's play by:

- Having a playful approach with them
- Listening to them and valuing what they say
- Valuing friendships and children's time with each other
- Letting them initiate their own play and play on their own
- Building on their interests
- Talking to them about their play
- Allowing them to take risks in their play.



## The benefits of outdoor play

Busier family lives, combined with an increased sense of fear in society as well as Covid-19 restrictions, means that children today have fewer opportunities to play and learn outside.

There are concerns that this could be hampering children's social skills as well as risking stifling their long-term physical and emotional development and wellbeing. Spending time safely outdoors (as part of our daily exercise allowance) can boost our wellbeing, especially during the winter months when we have less exposure to sunlight.

### Helps physical development

Some physical skills are much easier for children to develop outside – running, jumping, throwing, catching and skipping are some of the large motor skill activities that are best developed outdoors.

Being outside encourages movement which, in turn, reduces the risk of obesity. It is reported that outdoor play also reduces tension and stress. In

a world packed with directed activities, simply running around without direction can be a stress reliever.

### Helps intellectual development

A child's intellectual development can be enhanced when they experience using all of their senses as well as their bodies and minds. Being outdoors requires children to use their sense of touch, sight, sound and smell, along with their major muscle groups, which increases the chances of quality learning.

### Helps children deal with change

Unstructured outdoor play not only leads to additional cognitive development, but it can also build self-confidence. Children who play outdoors in varied environments are more comfortable outside of the confines of their home. These children can transition better into new settings and are more confident in dealing with change.



# The importance of risk in play

Risk taking is an essential feature of play. Children need the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating learning environment. They need to take risks in order to explore limits, try new experiences and develop their capacities.

Experience of managing risk helps keep children safe. It is important for families and professionals working with children to strike the right balance between keeping children safe and allowing them the freedom they need. If children learn about managing risk from an early age, it will give them more confidence to do this throughout their childhood.



At a time when play and social interaction may be restricted, it's important to remember that risk in play is a crucial aspect of children's learning and development – it helps children

know their limits. Most children know when to stop before it gets dangerous, so it's important parents and those working with them don't stifle their sense of adventure.

## Play and the Covid-19 pandemic

Practitioners and parents observing children's play during the pandemic have a unique chance to contribute to an archive that will inform future generations about how children's play experiences changed due to Covid-19.

Researchers from the University of Reading are compiling an archive for future generations. The Pandemic Play Archive will be an online collection of memories depicting examples of children's play.

The researchers are keen to hear from parents and practitioners who have observed interesting play during the pandemic. They would like written descriptions, drawings and/or photographs of play where the theme of the play is related to the pandemic



– for example, the virus, social distancing, lockdown, medical procedures or where the circumstances have led children to play in novel or unique ways.

The written descriptions, drawings and/or photographs can be created by adults who have observed children's play or by children themselves.

Practitioners and parents may only upload materials that they are happy to be shared openly with a public audience. For copyright reasons, only parents or guardians can submit photographs of children.

More details at <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/merl-collections/research-projects/pandemic-play/>



## Glamis Adventure Playground supports local families

**Glamis Adventure Playground**, managed by Shadwell Community Project (SCP), used the March lockdown to support the community in different ways, make changes to the project and plan for their re-opening.

Through immediate contact with local families, the project discovered that they needed devices to access online schooling and screen-based learning activities for children. While directing families to available services, SCP made funding applications for tablets and delivered play parcels.

Refurbishments made to the site during lockdown included a fixed zip wire, sand and water play opportunities. These new additions complement the big swings, treehouse, boat as well as the playworker led creative activities. With the improvements in place, Glamis set its sights on opening safely for the summer. They reviewed all procedures and risk assessments, sourced new food suppliers, re-inducted staff, put signs and sanitiser dispensaries up and marked the

site into different areas. Once the online register and booking system was on the website, they opened their gates for summer play and ran a full summer project with no Covid-19 cases. When government guidelines allowed, the project continued to book in bubbles.

The second lockdown in November brought new challenges but as outdoor play is so important, now more than ever, they quickly re-focused their attention on the needs of local families who lack outside space. Creating family bubble play sessions, the project welcomed groups of six for an hour, three days a week, in line with the social distancing rules at the time.

With all that Glamis Adventure Playground has done to support local families through the pandemic, it's no wonder that Cllr Rabina Khan has nominated the vital play facility for a well-deserved 'Covid Hero' award!

More details, visit: [www.shadwellcommunityproject.org](http://www.shadwellcommunityproject.org)

## Playing with marks

Children are natural mark-makers. From very early on they make marks on surfaces. It may look like they are 'just playing', but in fact, they are developing skills for writing.

Mark-making is so much more than pencil on paper, so when you are working with children, be experimental and make sure they have access to a wide range of materials.

Play with marks by:

- Making marks with shaving foam, cornflour slime or sand
- Pressing fingers or objects into playdough to create marks
- Making marks with water using paint-brushes or cotton buds
- Painting using an easel and large brushes
- Using chalks to mark the ground
- Making rubbings of rough surfaces
- Creating your own mark-making tools using things like twigs and feathers.







## Hungry Little Minds

Hungry Little Minds is a campaign from the Department of Education (DfE) in response to the government's pledge to reduce the number of children who finish Reception without the communication, language and literacy skills they need to thrive. The campaign is aimed at parents and carers and

reinforces key messages from the Every Tower Hamlets Child a Talker (ETHCaT) programme, which the Early Years Integrated Service has been delivering since 2013.

Other local early intervention programmes that support the home learning environment are Bookstart Corner and Early

Words Together. These evidence-based programmes aim to reduce the number of children still entering school below age related expectations for communication and language.

For more details

Email: [charlotte.herxheimer@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.herxheimer@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Calling Tower Hamlets young musicians!

Tower Hamlets Arts & Music Education Service (THAMES) are looking for new members to join their music centres and ensembles.

From orchestras and choirs to inclusive ensembles and bands, there's a broad range of opportunities for young people aged 7-18 of all musical abilities.

Music activities have continued

online throughout this past year, including performing online concerts and creating music videos.

For more information or to register, visit [thames.towerhamlets.gov.uk](https://thames.towerhamlets.gov.uk)

For general enquiries:

Email: [THAMES.admin@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:THAMES.admin@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Tel: **020 7364 0431**



### Music Centres and Ensembles

**Saturday Music Centre** Saturdays, 9am - 12.30pm

**Wednesday Music Centre** Wednesdays, 4 - 6pm

**Primary Choir** Mondays, 4.30 - 5.30pm

**Youth Orchestra** School holiday courses

**Soundbox Inclusive Ensemble** Saturdays (fortnightly), 10.30am - 1pm



## Message from Councillor Danny Hassell



Despite the ongoing pressures from Covid-19, our services for children and families have continued. We remain committed to supporting our community during these times. Our schools have been doing a fantastic job of keeping our children safe at school, acting where needed and continuing to provide a strong educational offer.

The excellent work of our schools has been recognised in the Sunday Times. Mayflower Primary School was named as primary school of the year (for the second time). Several other Tower Hamlets schools – St Edmund's, Sir William Burrough, Blue Gate Fields Junior, Bigland Green and English Martyrs – also appeared in the top 500 list. Congratulations to you all!

We have also secured a £100m plus package of capital investment for our secondary schools – releasing funding for new secondary schools at London Dock and Westferry and for a rebuild of George Green's School. This investment into high-quality secondary school buildings will ensure our children have state-of-the-art facilities to support their learning.

Last term the council continued with its roll out of over 2,000 laptops for Year 10 children in receipt of free school meals and those children with a social worker. This will help improve digital inclusion across the borough and support home learning. Other charities and schools are also supporting laptops for more of their families too. We have also supported families with food costs over the Christmas break with £25 supermarket vouchers for 18,000 children in the borough.

Whilst there has been such positive news with the start of a vaccine roll-out, we all need to continue to play our part to help keep our community safe over the coming months. This means following the government guidelines, getting tested and isolating if you (or someone you live with) have symptoms and remembering 'hands, face, space'.

**Cllr Danny Hassell**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Schools**  
**London Borough of Tower Hamlets**



## Children's centres are open during lockdown

All 12 children's centres in Tower Hamlets will remain open throughout lockdown for vulnerable children. Health and safety remains a top priority – for staff, families and the community. The children's centres have adapted their services to be 'Covid-secure' and they will continue to offer:

- Health appointments
- Early learning for two-years-olds
- Face-to-face support for vulnerable, and newly vulnerable, parents.

The centres will be following the latest government guidance, which means timetables and services are subject to change.

Please make an appointment before you visit by phoning your local children's centre.

For up to date information, visit  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/childrenscentres)





*Razia Begum, parent, collecting books for her son during lockdown*



*Kate Wheeler, William Davis Teacher reading for pupils during an online story session*

## Working together to uphold a love of reading during Covid-19

A message from Annika Eadie, Headteacher, William Davis Primary School

“ This month I took part in the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) national conference. As part of this, I reflected on the challenges and creative solutions required, particularly around reading, during Covid-19 times.

Parents, schools and library services all work together to ensure that children love reading. At William Davis we believe learning to read is the most important thing every child will learn at school. We want all children to love reading – and to want to read for themselves.

Tower Hamlets Schools Library Service ensures that schools have up-to-date fiction and nonfiction; they run exciting events to engage our children as readers. Tower Hamlets public libraries and Idea Stores encourage reading for pleasure; they engage children through events e.g. the Summer Reading Challenge.

There remain challenges for the library service during Covid-19. Our families require greater access to online resources and additional support to overcome language and literacy barriers. But creative solutions such as increased access to audio books, online story sessions, and

promoting family story times, could have real impact.

At William Davis we continue to look for creative and flexible solutions to make sure that reading stays centre stage.”



*Annika Eadie, Headteacher William Davis Primary School*



## Craft bags for children at St John's

Children learn best through hands-on experiences. Since they are spending more leisure and learning time online, it's important that they also have opportunities to handle real life materials. Exploring materials and expressing themselves through arts and crafts can provide an emotional release and help reduce anxiety.

Rashina Begum and Denise Foster, family support partners, have been working tirelessly to ensure all early years and Key Stage 1 children (as well as isolating families) at **St John's Primary School** had a stimulating craft bag to keep them busy over the festive period.

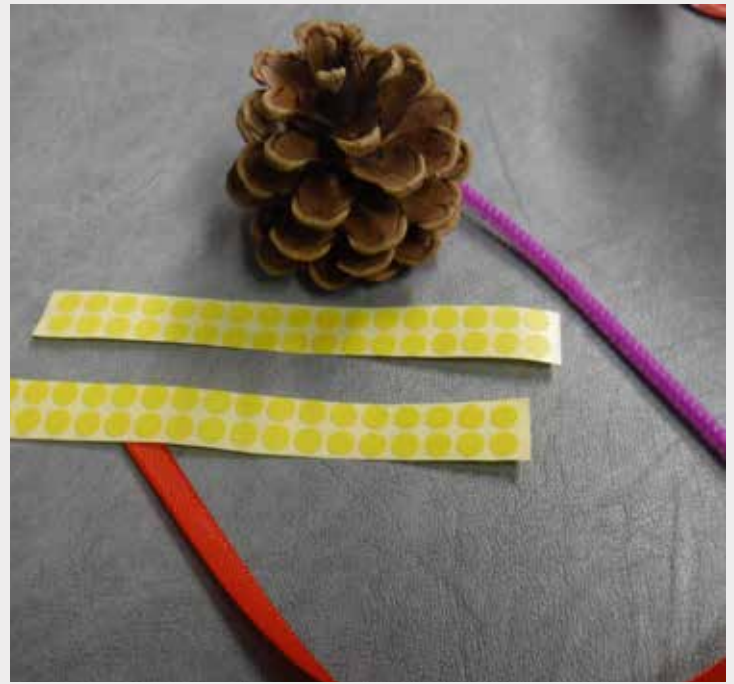
With generous donations from the Bromley by Bow Centre and supplementary literacy resources provided by Pyjamarama Books, the children were set for a creative holiday.

“

**Families really valued the craft bags – at a time when children are spending more time indoors, they were a great way to keep them busy over the holidays.**

Denise Foster, PET Family Support Partner  
St John's Primary School

”



## Learning packs at Stephen Hawking

When parents have a good relationship with their child's school and are involved in their learning, children have the best outcomes. That's the guiding principle behind the Parental Engagement Team's work and one that is shared by **Stephen Hawking School**. They have been working in partnership providing learning packs to support children's home learning during the holidays or when they cannot attend school.

The packs, which are themed according to the season, feature activities devised by specialist teachers at the school. The Parental Engagement Team have been sharing some of their emotional wellbeing resources for the packs. This approach reflects the school's ethos of building relationships with families and partners to ensure that children attending the school achieve their full potential.

“

**These packs help keep the children busy when they are not at school and are encouraging children and parents to learn new skills and interact together.**

Danella Field  
Pupil Resource Coordinator

”



## Could your school host the Holiday Childcare Scheme?

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme is Ofsted registered and provides childcare for children aged 3 to 13. It is held at schools in Tower Hamlets and runs during the school holidays (excluding the Christmas break) from 8am - 6pm (for working parents) or 9am - 5pm.

The scheme supports working parents and offers places to children who need additional support. In partnership with Tower Hamlets schools, the scheme has provided critical childcare provision for families during the pandemic.

The scheme are looking for new school sites to join its pool of schools. It provides highly qualified and experienced staff, all equipment and covers school cleaning costs.



To find out more about hosting the Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme to provide easy access to childcare for working parents in your school, headteachers and school leaders can contact:

**Selina Tamana**  
**Holiday Childcare Team**  
**Manager**  
**Email: [selina.tamana@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:selina.tamana@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

## Childcare survey 2020

The Childcare Survey 2020, produced by Coram Family and Childcare, shows a mixed picture for families in Britain. Over the last few years many parents have been able to get more free childcare for their three and four year olds. Others who are not entitled to free childcare still face very high prices.

The survey shows that the system is too complicated and calls for action to make sure that every family is able to access high quality childcare.

Read the full report at  
[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org)

## Tower Hamlets Transition Support Service

The service provides impartial advice, information and assistance to support children, young people and their families during key points of transition.

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

For more information contact Tower Hamlets Transition Support Service

**Tel: 020 7364 1533**  
**Email: [transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

## Anti-bullying and behaviour support

**Need advice on how to deal with bullying and behaviour issues?**

You can get support by attending a virtual workshop for parents delivered by experienced Parent and Family Support Service Transition Officers. It will provide tips about what to do if you're worried about bullying and behaviour and will explore ways to help you talk to your child and your child's school about these concerns.

**Friday 29 January 2021, 10 – 11.30am**

Anti-bullying support workshops will be delivered on a monthly basis. Future dates can be found on page 33.

**Tel: 020 7364 1533**  
**Email: [transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**



## Parenting support during the pandemic

The Parent and Family Support Service recognise that this is a potentially worrying time for parents and carers as they juggle the needs of the family with the additional pressure of spending more time at home.

The parenting team provide flexible support and advice via telephone, text, email, and video calls to parents and professionals.

Experienced practitioners are on hand to provide parenting advice based on extensive knowledge of strategies proven to work. English, Bengali and Somali speaking practitioners are available where possible.

Practitioners can:

- Offer parenting tips for parents of children of all ages from toddlers to teens
- Advise on how to talk to children who may be worried about Covid-19

- Talk through tried and tested behaviour management strategies
- Signpost to online resources and services.

“

**I feel that I am a lot calmer when making request of my teenager now. I have learnt a lot of things and I'm happy the session is online.**

Parent

”

“

**I feel happy to attend a programme delivered in my own language, practitioners really helped me to improve my relationship with my son.**

Parent

”

## Parenting Exchange Group

Whilst Covid-19 has dominated the past year, the delivery of parenting programmes and support for parents has continued.

New parenting programmes have been introduced and existing evidence-based parenting programmes adapted so they can be delivered virtually online. Although this initially brought challenges, there were also positives, with more flexible delivery and improved access for working parents and parents at home isolating/shielding or home schooling.

During the spring term, the Parental Engagement Team will facilitate a Parenting Exchange Group to bring together different organisations in Tower Hamlets to explore current parenting provision and establish an information sharing network.

The meeting will take place on:

**Wednesday 3 February  
3 - 4.30pm**

If you are interested in being part of this group, please send your name, role and organisation to [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)



To book a place on an online parenting programme or to attend a virtual parenting group contact the Parenting Team.

Email: [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Tel: **020 7364 6398**

# Virtual parenting sessions

Although the parenting team are currently unable to offer group parenting programmes in the community, they are offering a range of virtual parenting groups.

The parenting groups focus on key topics such as encouraging positive behaviour, getting teens to cooperate and an introduction to the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) programme.

## Parenting Programme Timetable Spring Term (delivered virtually) January – March 2021

Programme	Age	Additional info	Delivery dates
SFSC*	Birth-18 years	A five-week shortened version of SFSC adapted for virtual delivery. Delivered in Bengali.	Rolling programme Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
SFSC	Birth-18 years	A five-week shortened version of SFSC adapted for virtual delivery. Delivered in English.	Tuesday (evening) Wednesday
Triple P Group Teen Programme	12-18 years	Delivered in English.	Tuesday
Triple P Group	18 months - 18 years	Delivered in English.	Tuesday or Friday
Triple P Seminars – The Power of Positive Parenting	18 months - 18 years	One-off session introducing positive parenting strategies.	Rolling programme
Triple P Group and Teen Discussion Group Series	18 months - 18 years	Topic specific sessions covering a range of parenting concerns. Delivered in English.	Dates TBC (one-off sessions)
Triple P Family Transitions	Birth-18 years	NEW for January 2021. For parents who are experiencing personal distress from separation or divorce which is impacting on their parenting.	Thursday
ADHD – The Parent Factor	5-18 years	For parents of a child with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Delivered in English.	Dates TBC
Emotional First Aid		Parents' Emotional First Aid (EFA) programme. Delivered in English.	Friday
Triple P Online	18 months-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.	Flexible - at the convenience of the parent

\* *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities*

### Get in touch

The parenting team look forward to receiving enquires from parents, carers, early help and social care colleagues, school staff and other agencies in the borough. For advice, to book a place on the online parenting programme or to attend a virtual parenting group contact the Parenting Team

Email: [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk) Tel: 020 7364 6398





# Parental engagement – support for the RSE curriculum

## Speakeasy – a course for parents and carers

Today's children and young people are growing up in a complex world and living more of their lives online. Although this presents many exciting opportunities, it also poses many challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way.

Relationships Education is now compulsory in all primary schools in England and Relationships and Sex Education compulsory in all secondary schools. Parents are the prime educators and have a key role to play in delivering this, but many may feel embarrassed or unsure how to fulfil this responsibility. The Speakeasy course addresses this by increasing parents' knowledge, so that they

can talk to their children more confidently about body changes, feelings, relationships and sex.

The course allows parents to come together in a non-judgemental environment to share their experiences and learn together through discussions, games and role-play.

Delivered by accredited practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, who continuously update the material to ensure its relevance, the course now features the latest resources produced by the NSPCC, Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) and the Department for Education (DfE). Covering some of today's most challenging issues including social media pressures, child sexual exploitation (CSE), sexting, female genital mutilation (FGM) and gangs, the course

“

**The Parental Engagement Team have worked hard to adapt the Speakeasy course to make it accessible for parents via Zoom. Parents have been using the tools they've picked up, which have been invaluable, this year more than ever.**

Aysha Begum  
Parental Engagement and Outreach  
Central Foundation  
Girls School

”

aims to equip parents with the knowledge and strategies to keep their children safe.

*Continued on page 25*

## Course content

- Physical and emotional changes taking place at puberty
- Sex education in the context of family life
- Identifying and responding to the age-appropriate needs of children
- Societal and cultural attitudes towards sex and sexuality as it relates to children
- Information on sex and relationships education in schools

### Additional information

- The Speakeasy course informs parents about the curriculum, provides opportunities to discuss the changes and encourages

parents to speak to individual schools about resources they will be using with their children

- Speakeasy helps parents understand how they can support their child's school-based learning at home
- Where Speakeasy is delivered in schools, SRE/PHSE teachers/leads contribute to the programme and are invited to speak to parents usually during week 4, giving them an opportunity to discuss the curriculum, resources used and to dispel myths and playground 'mis talk'
- The programme provides opportunities for parents to ask questions, for two-way dialogue between home and school and to strengthen home school relationships.

“

**Absolute eye opener for us. Every parent should attend this course – I want it in school.**

Parent

”

“

**This course was amazing. It encouraged me to have these difficult conversations with my children.**

Parent

”

**To find out more about the Speakeasy course and how it can be delivered by Service Level Agreement in your school email [denise.de-goze@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:denise.de-goze@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**

## Young people accused of 'Sadfishing'

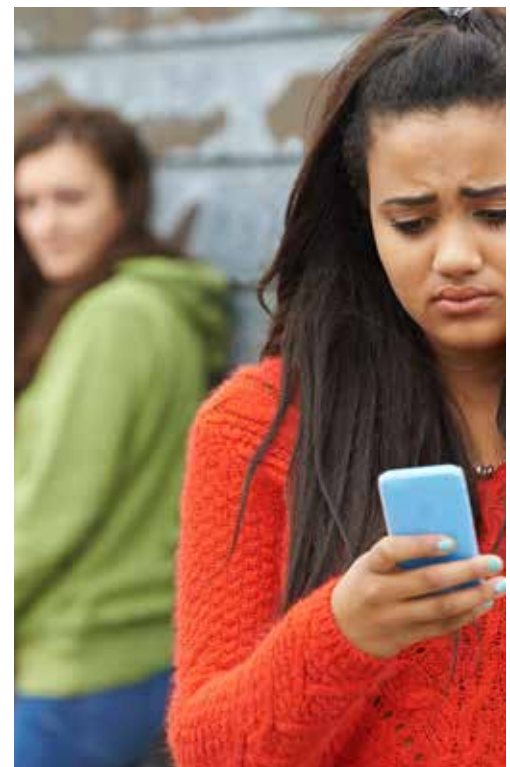
'Sadfishing' is being reported by young people as a growing trend which they are finding difficult to manage. The social media phenomenon emerged after some celebrities were accused of posting exaggerated claims about their emotional problems to generate sympathy and publicity. What's worrying is that young people with genuine mental health issues who seek support online can often be unfairly accused that they are 'sadfishing'.

There have been increased reports of young people who have been bullied for 'sadfishing'. The bullying is usually through

comments on social media, messaging apps or even face-to-face. This rejection can damage their already fragile self-esteem and leave them feeling disappointed by not getting the support they need online.

In addition, groomers can also use comments that express a need for emotional support as a platform to connect with young people and gain their trust, only to try and exploit it at a later point.

To find out more about 'sadfishing' and other online trends, visit [www.digitalawarenessuk.com](http://www.digitalawarenessuk.com)







## Online sessions to help build family resilience

The pandemic has left many children feeling anxious with parents feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. To help tackle this, Thrive London are supporting a series of online sessions to help families thrive when faced with uncertainty.

The sessions will provide parents with a set of practical tools to help their families thrive now and into the future.

There will be six, one hour sessions and learning materials will be provided. You can join the live sessions or watch the recorded sessions in your own time.

For more details and to sign up <https://bounceforward.com/raise-resilience-london-parents/>

### 5 ways to build resilience

#### Be self-compassionate

Give yourself permission to say 'this is hard' or 'I'm really worried'.

#### Be flexible

Allow yourself to relax previously held standards that don't make sense in the present.

#### Re-frame frustrations

Reframe frustrations so that you can see the positive aspects in situations

#### Be physically active

Build up your physical energy to allow yourself to apply emotional and mental energy to daily stressors.

#### Sleep

High quality sleep will sustain the energy you'll need to be resilient everyday.

## The Young Carers Project

The Young Carers Project is run by Tower Hamlets Youth Service for all young carers aged 8-18 in Tower Hamlets. The project aims to provide young carers the opportunity to take a break from the daily responsibilities of being a carer by interacting with others facing similar challenges.

For more information and to learn how professionals can provide support for young carers visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/carers](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/carers)

For any other information, contact  
**Sorrel Norwood**  
Young Carers Participation  
Worker

Tel: **020 7364 4091**

Email: [sorrel.norwood@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:sorrel.norwood@towerhamlets.gov.uk)





# The Tower Hamlets Solace Advocacy and Support Service

From 4 January 2021, Solace, a leading domestic and sexual abuse charity, will be the new providers of Tower Hamlets' domestic abuse advocacy service. The new service will be called the Tower Hamlets Solace Advocacy and Support Service (TH SASS).

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) will offer one-to-one support to victims of domestic abuse. Some of the advocates will be based in Poplar Job Centre and Housing Options, supporting victims of economic abuse and those at risk of homelessness. The rest of the IDVA team will prioritise high risk cases but work with any level of risk.

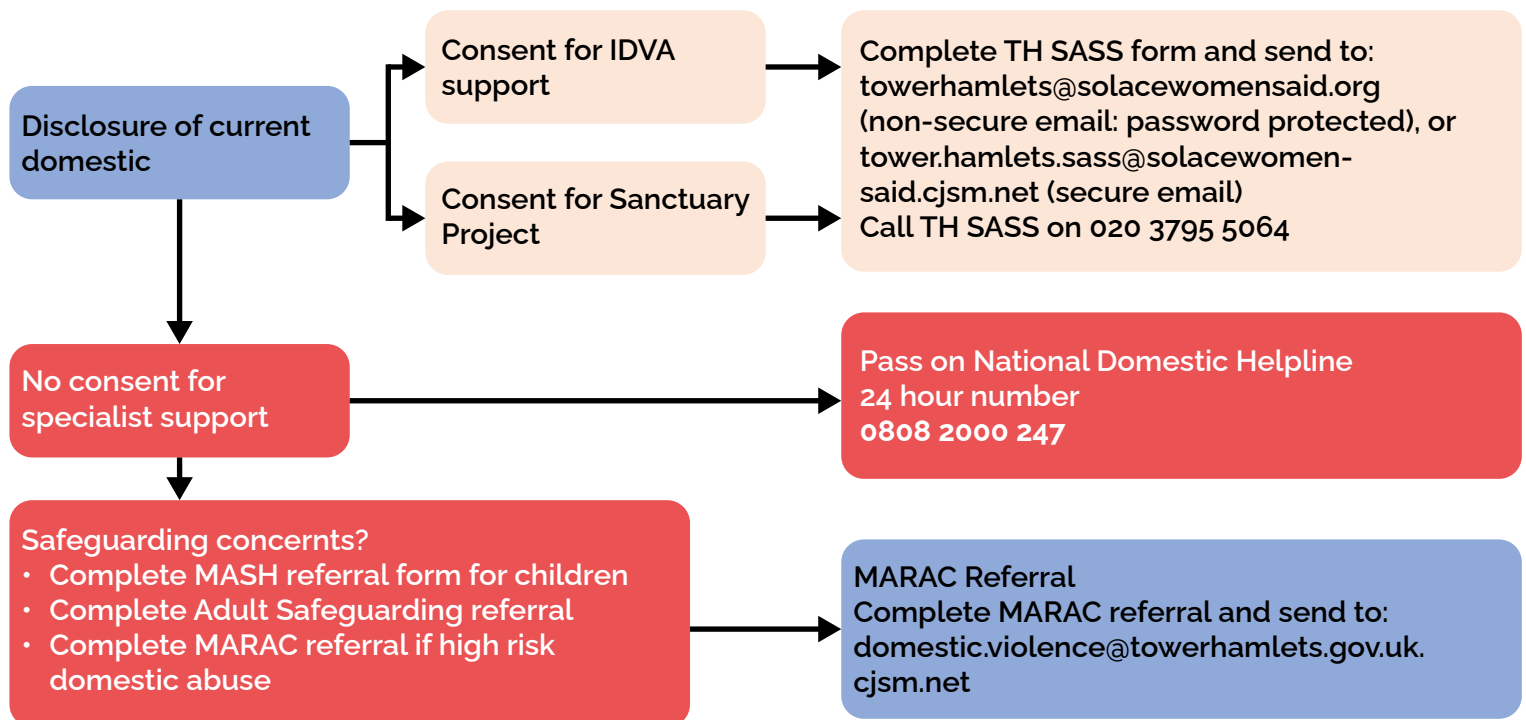


## Changes to the referral system

From 4 January, the LBTH DV1 referral form will no longer be used. The new referral form required for IDVA support and

the Sanctuary Scheme is the TH SASS form which is available on the Tower Hamlets website. Victims need to consent to be referred for IDVA Support or the Sanctuary Scheme.

## New referral pathway for professionals



The National Domestic Violence Helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week  
 Tel: 0808 2000 247

# Hard Calls Save Lives

Every little bit of information is useful in the fight against knife crime. We know that it can be difficult to pick up the phone, but sharing what you know with Crimestoppers anonymously can help to make our communities safer. If something doesn't feel right, call Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on **0800 555 111**.

Crimestoppers have released two new videos linked to their campaign to help save lives. The first shows what happens when you make a call to Crimestoppers and how they check your information to ensure no part of it could identify you to the police or anyone else. The second

**I don't know anything that can stop knife crime in my area.**

**Are you sure? Anything in your area that doesn't feel right could be helpful.**

Call CrimeStoppers with knife crime information,  
**100% anonymously 0800 555 111**

It can feel like a hard call, but it could stop another young person being killed.

**HARD CALLS SAVE LIVES**

illustrates that a small piece of information, such someone reporting a particular car driving away from an incident, could be the missing piece in an investigation.

You can see the videos at [crimestoppers-uk.org/hardcallssavelives](https://crimestoppers-uk.org/hardcallssavelives)

Look out for more from their Hard Calls Save Lives campaign in the months to come.

## Parents' stress and depression 'rise during lockdowns'

**Levels of stress, depression and anxiety among parents and carers have increased with the pressures of the lockdowns, suggests research from the University of Oxford.**

The **research**, based on responses from 6,246 parents and carers between mid-March and the end of December 2020, found issues including difficulty relaxing, feeling hopeless and being irritable. Parents also reported being 'substantially

worried' about their children's behaviour and had concerns about their children's education and future.

The researchers said higher levels of stress were detected particularly in low-income families, as well as single-parent households and those with children with special educational needs.

For more information visit [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55707322](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55707322)



For parenting support and advice, including information on evidence-based parenting courses and strategies to encourage children's positive behaviour, email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or call **020 7364 6398**.

Parents of secondary aged children who are concerned about their children's future can join the Parental Engagement Team's next Platform to Talk session on 'Keeping Teens Motivated to Learn', **Monday 8 February, 10am - 11.30am**

# Healthy Families online workshop

Is your family snacking more during lockdown?

Are you struggling for ideas to make healthy meals?

Are you finding it difficult to be active?

Why not join the online workshop, delivered by experienced practitioners from the Parental Engagement Schools and Families Team.

You'll have the chance to share your concerns, pick up some ideas for quick, easy meals and discover how to get your family to be more active!

**Wednesday 10 March**  
**10 - 11am**

For more details and for Zoom invitation, email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk), stating your child's school and age.

## Boloh

### Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic family Covid-19 Helpline

Supporting information for **Professionals**

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and families have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 and are facing significant challenges to their emotional health and wellbeing.

Children and young people from these communities continue to be the hidden victims of the pandemic, which has exacerbated existing inequalities. These children have experienced more trauma, such as death and illness and rising hate crime due to COVID-19, leading to anxiety and other mental health difficulties. All are likely to increase further as their parents continue to be on the frontline and risk continued exposure to Covid-19 or they could be experiencing financial burdens and unemployment.

**Have you been affected by Coronavirus?**

**We are here to help.**

**Call the**

**Boloh**

helpline for free support for you and your family

Lines are open between Monday and Friday 10am – 8pm, Saturday and Sunday 10am – 3pm on

**0800 1512 605**

Or talk to us on our webchat by visiting [helpline.barnardos.org.uk](https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk) and click on the icon on the bottom right

Believe in children  
Barnardo's

Believe in children  
Barnardo's

## Stay updated with local coronavirus information

-  Stay alert
-  Control the virus
-  Save lives

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/coronavirus)





## Protect children against flu this winter

Flu is caused by a virus and it can be a very unpleasant illness for children. It can also lead to more serious problems like bronchitis and pneumonia. Children can spread flu easily, so vaccinating them is important as it can help protect others who are vulnerable, such as babies and older people.

The children's flu vaccine is free and a non-porcine alternative is also available. All children aged 2 and 3 on 31 Aug 2020, primary school and Year 7 children are eligible for the vaccine. Since Covid-19 is also in circulation this season, it is now more important than ever to protect against flu.

Find out where you can get your child vaccinated at [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health\\_social\\_care/public\\_health/immunisation.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health_social_care/public_health/immunisation.aspx)

For more details, email **Sumaira Tayyab**  
Public Health Programme  
Manager  
Email: [sumaira.tayyab@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:sumaira.tayyab@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## The period product scheme

No one should be held back from accessing education due to their period. Last year the government introduced the period product scheme to provide free period products for all learners who need them. This scheme will continue into 2021.

This means learners at all state maintained schools and 16 to 19 education organisations in England will continue to have access to free period products in their place of study.

To make sure organisations have access to a wide range of period products, a partnership has been formed with Personnel Hygiene Services Limited (PHS). This allows organisations to order period products and have them delivered when they need them. When ordering products, organisations should consider the specific needs of their learners and when distributing the products, they should think about the impact that any perceived stigma around periods could have on learners accessing products.

### Who is eligible

All learners in schools and 16 to 19 organisations should be able to access period products if they need them. This could include learners who

- have forgotten their products
- cannot afford products
- have come on their period unexpectedly.

### How to order products

PHS will continue to stock and deliver period products. They also provide customer service support relating to the ordering and delivery of products.

For more details, call PHS on **01827 255500**.

For government guidance on the period product scheme, visit [www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england)

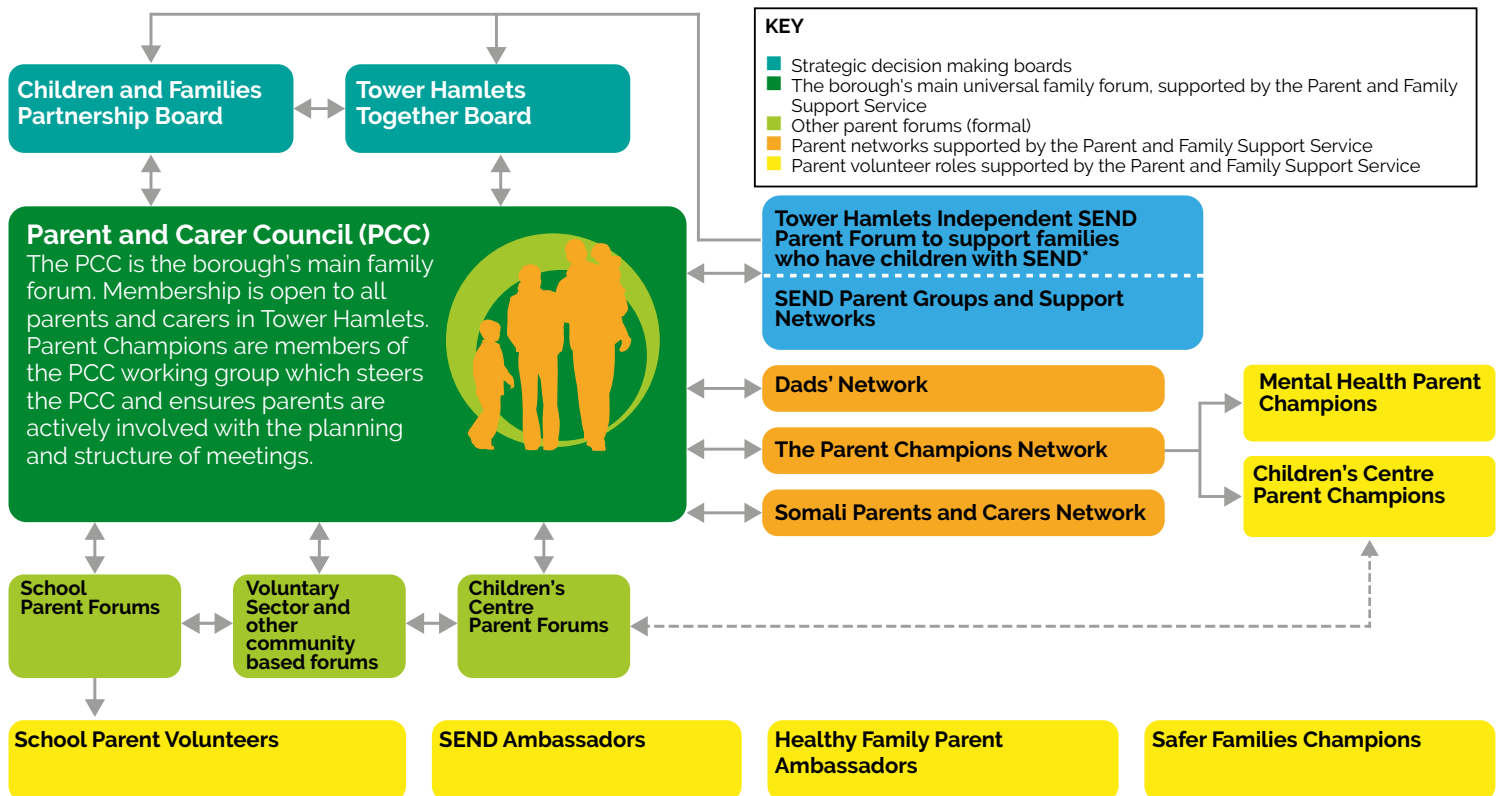
## 'Chat Health' with the school nurse

A new initiative has been launched to allow young people to message a school nurse between 9am - 4pm, Monday to Friday. They can receive advice and support and discuss any health concerns. The service is for young people aged 11-19 years old.

You can contact the school nurse on **07507 332942**



# Tower Hamlets Parental Engagement Governance Structure



\*Independent from the local authority

Associate forums/groups may have their own Terms of Reference. Members of these forums/groups may attend PCC meetings as representatives of their original forum or as independent members on an individual basis.

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil)

FamiliesMatter



## The Somali Parents and Carers Network

The Somali Parents and Carer Network is a support group for Somali parents and a forum to share experiences, listen to guest speakers and discuss topics relating to education, health, parenting and safeguarding.

The Parental Engagement Team has been adapting to the current pandemic by inviting Somali parents and carers to virtual network meetings instead of face-to-face meetings. Each meeting is usually based on a theme or is planned in response to the changing needs of the parents and carers in the group.

At a time when children are spending more and more time online as a result of the pandemic, many of the parents in the group have been very concerned about online safety. In response, parents and carers from the network were invited

to attend a specialist e-safety session, delivered in Somali by experienced practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team. The session provided parents with the opportunity to share their concerns, ask questions and pick up some useful tips on how to keep children safe while online.

The next Somali Parents and Carers Network virtual meetings are on:

**Tuesdays**  
**9 February, 9 March, 27 April**  
**11am - 1pm**

For more information or to book a place  
**Email:** [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
**Tel:** **020 7364 6398**

# Parent and Carer Council goes virtual

The first virtual Parent and Carer Council meeting was held in October. It was a success with 67 attendees. The agenda included:

- Mental health support with the Parent Champion volunteers
- An introduction to James Thomas, Corporate Director of Children & Culture
- The regular update from Cllr Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children & Schools

Our Let's Talk topics included Black Lives Matter and anti-racism work in schools led by Global Learning London and the current Covid-19 messages for families.

Global Learning London took expressions of interest from parents who were keen to support their management committee. Links were also made to the council's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission to

“

**Thank you to everyone involved in making this meeting happen today. Very informative.**

Jacqui, PCC Parent and Parent Liaison Worker, Cubitt Town Infants' and Junior School

”

tackle racism and inequality at a wider level. For more information on the commission, visit

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/raceinequalitiescommission](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/raceinequalitiescommission)

The Healthy Lives Team gave an update on Relationship and Sex Education in schools. Christine McInnes, Divisional Director for

“

**Looking forward to future sessions, glad I attended, quite useful.**

Laura, PCC Parent

**Thank you... the best parent session I've attended.**

Safia, PCC Parent

”

Education and Partnerships also gave a presentation on changes to SEND provision and how parents could share their views via the official consultation.

The next meeting is on **Saturday 6 March 2021 10.30am - 12.30pm via Zoom.**

Global Learning London showed a short video of one of their projects 'TAFAHUM - Opening Hearts, Opening Minds. Raise your Voice for Change!'. Many parents said they enjoyed and felt inspired by it. <https://vimeo.com/296498838>

For more information or to join the Parent and Carer Council visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil)

## Does education need a reboot?

Global Learning London are also continuing the conversation they had with parents at the Parent and Carer Council.

The COVID-19 pandemic, a greater commitment to anti-racism and the growth in activism is challenging education as we know it.

Lockdown has given us a new found appreciation for teachers, but it has also given us time to rethink priorities and reflect on the values which lie at the heart of education. This has fuelled a desire to re-imagine education and the values it promotes.



### How do you think we can reboot education?

Join the conversation by sharing your views on social media with the hashtag #RebootingEducation!

[www.rebootthefuture.org/rebootingeducation](http://www.rebootthefuture.org/rebootingeducation)



# Important dates and events for parents

Date/time	Description
Every Thursday during term time 10am - 12 noon	<b>Virtual SEND Parents Support Group facilitated by Information Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS) staff</b> For parents to provide emotional support to each other and build resilience with monthly talks from professionals on key topics identified by the group. For more information call <b>020 7364 6489</b> or email <a href="mailto:towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk">towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Friday 29 January 26 February 26 March 30 April 10 - 11.30am	<b>Monthly anti-bullying and behaviour support virtual workshops</b> The session will provide tips about what to do if you're worried about bullying and behaviour. It will explore ways to help you talk to your child and your child's school about bullying and behaviour concerns. For more information contact the Tower Hamlets Transition Support Service on <b>020 7364 1533</b> or email <a href="mailto:transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk">transitions@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Monday 8 February 8 March 12 April 10 - 11.30am	<b>Platform to Talk virtual workshops for parents</b> The sessions will cover a range of topical issues from health and wellbeing, family life, parenting, school and more.
Tuesdays 9 February, 9 March, 27 April 11am - 1pm	<b>Somali Parents and Carers Network virtual meetings</b> The network meets monthly and provides opportunities for Somali parents and carers to discuss key issues around education, health and well-being, obtain information and hear from guest speakers.
Saturday 6 March 10am - 12.30pm	<b>Parent and Carer Council virtual meeting</b> The borough's main family forum and key consultation vehicle to support borough-wide consultation with parents and carers. For more information email <a href="mailto:parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk">parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Tuesday 9 March 10am - 12 noon	<b>Annual Review virtual workshop for parents</b> The Tower Hamlets & City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS) are offering an online workshop for parents to discuss key issues about an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Review including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What should happen before, during and after an Annual Review</li> <li>● What key questions/topics should be covered during the review meeting</li> <li>● Ensuring a child's EHCP is ready for transferring to secondary school.</li> </ul> For more information call <b>020 7364 6489</b> or email <a href="mailto:towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk">towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Thursday 11 March 10am - 1pm	<b>Education, Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP) virtual workshop</b> The Tower Hamlets & City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS) are offering an online workshop for parents to provide key information about the EHCP process. For more information call <b>020 7364 6489</b> or email <a href="mailto:towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk">towerhamlets&amp;city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Wednesday 17 March 10am - 2.30pm	<b>Annual Parent and Carer Conference (delivered online via Zoom)</b> Save the date – further information on how to book places for parents will be available shortly.

For more information contact the Parental Engagement Team on **020 7364 6398** or email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)



*Tahmina Choudhury (and son), SEND Parent Ambassador*



*Suhela Khatun-Hussain (and son), SEND Parent Ambassador*

## Meet the SEND Parent Ambassadors

“ We are a diverse group of parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who are passionate about addressing the prejudice and stigma associated with SEND.

By sharing our own experiences, we can help develop a greater awareness of SEND and connect with other SEND families to empower them to advocate for their children. It is through sharing our experiences amongst non-SEND families we are able to show some of the challenges and prejudices we face in society and through our continued work we aim to foster an inclusive community where all are treated equally.

We are able to reach out to some of the most vulnerable families and connect with a broader and inclusive audience which helps to promote the wider parental voice with the aim of supporting positive change within local services.

We provide support to families through outreach projects such as coffee mornings for parents, stay and play sessions at children's centres, parents evenings and lots more. We attend many professional meetings to openly share our views about our experiences of the services we use.

We have attended many professional events, including staff conferences, to ensure that service providers are aware of the impact of their provision for SEND families. The feedback we have received from professionals, SEND and non-SEND families has confirmed the need for such a unique and innovative programme within the borough. The programme has been recognised by the DfE as an innovative model of good practice.

The SEND Parent Ambassador programme is supported by SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS)."

If you would like to attend one of our coffee mornings or invite us to address either parents or professionals, please contact us on

Tel: **020 7364 7127** Email: [sendparentambassadors@gmail.com](mailto:sendparentambassadors@gmail.com)

## Information for families

The Family Information Service provides information and advice on services for children, young people (birth to 25 years old) and parents and carers. The team also manage the Local Offer, Tower Hamlets online directory of services and information for children, young people and families in Tower Hamlets.



To help parents and carers access the information they need, add the Family Information Service contact details and the Local Offer link to your school website. The telephone helpline is open 9am - 5pm.

Tel: **020 7364 6495**

Web: [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk)

## New SEND website

Did you know that the Tower Hamlets & City Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SEND IASS) has an exciting new website?

The website was launched at the beginning of November and features lots of information including a useful frequently asked questions page, a resource library and much more.

SEND IASS also run an advice line which you can contact if you are worried about your child with SEND as well as to get advice on Education Health and Care Plans.

Tel: **020 7364 6489**

Web: [www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com](http://www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com)



## Census day is coming

Sunday 21 March 2021 is Census Day and households across Tower Hamlets will be asked to take part in the nationwide survey of housing and the population.

The information gained from the census will help decide how local services in Tower Hamlets are planned and funded in the future. With one of the fastest growing populations in the country, it's important that the borough has an accurate picture so that they can meet the changing needs of the community.

Households will receive a letter with a unique access code in the post, allowing them to complete their questionnaire online, although paper questionnaires will also be available for those who need them.

The census will include questions about your sex, age, work, health, education, household size and ethnicity. And, for the first time, there will be a question asking people whether they have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

For more details, including the 30,000 flexible census job opportunities available, visit [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk)



Our Covid-19 community champions network is vital in helping share and keep our community up to date with the latest advice around Covid-19.

If you're interested in helping share information and keep friends, family and the wider community safe, sign up online [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/covidchampions](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/covidchampions).

Together we can help keep Tower Hamlets safe.





# Test and Trace Support Payment

If you are required to self-isolate by law, you may be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment. The £500 payment was introduced by the government to support people on low incomes in high risk areas, who are unable to work from home and would lose money by self-isolating.

Residents who meet the following criteria can apply for the payment:

- Advised to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, from either testing positive for Covid-19 or having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- Responded to messages from NHS Test and Trace to provide contact details, where they've tested positive.
- Employed or self-employed, unable to work from home and losing income as a result of self-isolating.
- In receipt of or the partner of someone who is in receipt of Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-related Employment and

Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

To find out more or to apply [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health\\_social\\_care/health\\_and\\_medical\\_advice/Coronavirus/Support\\_for\\_residents/Benefits\\_and\\_financial\\_support.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health_social_care/health_and_medical_advice/Coronavirus/Support_for_residents/Benefits_and_financial_support.aspx)

“

**If you have to self-isolate you shouldn't also have to worry about not being able to feed your family because you aren't able to work**



John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets

”

## Self-isolation and food support

Residents who are self-isolating or vulnerable can access food and wider support services through a dedicated phone line.

Tel: **020 7364 3030**

Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm



## RESIDENTS' SUPPORT SCHEME

Are you struggling to pay your energy bills, to put meals on the table, or to clean your clothes since the washing machine broke?

If you're in a crisis and need short term support with food, gas/ electric pre-payment, white goods and other urgent needs, we might be able to help.

Visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/RSS](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/RSS) or call **020 7520 7217** for more information.



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

## The Local Offer's dedicated Covid-19 page

The Local Offer is an online resource for all families and provides information on the support that is available for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families. It also features information on training, employment and independent living for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

The Local Offer has a dedicated Covid-19 page with up-to-date information and useful resources to support all families. The page is updated regularly and includes varied content ranging from health and wellbeing to bereavement, parenting, money matters and much more.

To find out more, visit [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/covid-19](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/covid-19)