

Chair of Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board

Issue 4 – December 2020



Hi, I am Cllr Rachel Blake and together with Dr Sam Everington (vice-chair) we hosted another busy Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) meeting on the 17 November 2020. As with so many things this year – a lot has happened since we met, with London now entering Tier 3. The whole council continues to work hard to support the community with staying safe and stopping the spread.

As always, we started the meeting with a story focusing on Homelessness and the impact it is having on service users during COVID-19 pandemic. It was really encouraging to hear from Ms Heading (service user) who explained how difficult it was for her family when they found themselves homeless. This doesn't mean 'rough sleeping' but for Ms Heading, her partner and 3 year old daughter, they had no choice but to move in with her mother-in-law in a one bed flat. With the support from housing options and other council departments she has finally secured her own flat and is getting the support she needs to get back on her feet. Through this process her 3 year old daughter has been diagnosed with Autism and is getting the support she needs and more importantly her daughter finally has the space she needs to flourish at home. Hearing from Ms Heading really highlighted how linked many of our services and experiences are – I know how residents mental health can be affected by their housing situation. The service is facing a challenging time as they prepare for winter but it's positive to hear that it is working for many of our residents.

As we move closer to developing a new 5 year Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the board was able to review the progress and agree on our objective of tackling health inequalities as well as emerging key priorities going forward 1) mental health and social isolation; 2) addressing the impacts of poverty; 3) physical activity and healthy weight. We will be running two workshop(s) in January 2021 to finalise our priorities and agree outcomes we want to achieve with your help. Please contact jamal.uddin@towerhamlets.gov.uk if you would like to take part in the workshops on 8th Jan, 1-3pm and 11th Jan, 9-10am. We look forward to seeing you.

COVID-19 is still a significant challenge we have to overcome and we are grateful for regular updates from colleagues and partners working hard to keep infection rates low and ensuring that services continue to support and treat people effectively with positive outcomes. With the vaccine now approved we are preparing locally for the roll out and I am happy to announce that the vaccination centre in Mile End is now open for appointments...

Safeguarding Annual reports 2019-20 covering both children's and adults were well received. It's vitally important that the learning from the reports and ongoing reviews inform better services and better practice as we move into the new year...

Finally, Tower Hamlets is anticipating a local area inspection of Special Educational Needs & Disabilities in April 2021. This will be a whole system inspection so will affect all our partners. There are significant weaknesses in the system identified by many families resulting in delays for diagnosis and care plans. I am keen that the Improvement Plan takes into account resources and partner commitment to ensure we are delivering the joined up and family focused services that the community needs.

I have no doubt that 2021 will be a busy year and we will continue to face huge challenges – I look forward to continuing our work as a Health and Wellbeing Board! In the meanwhile, keep well and stay safe...