

# Families Matter

A magazine full of news and information to support families

## Featuring the SEND Information Supplement

See [pages 25-28](#) for updates on our SEND improvement journey as well as information on services and the support available to families.



## Back to school after a summer of fun!

Over the summer, families in Tower Hamlets enjoyed taking part in various community events that took place in parks and community spaces across the borough. Many took the opportunity to come together, play and have fun.

Looking to the autumn, parents and carers may be preparing children for school and will be thinking about the winter months ahead. In this edition there is information about helping to manage family finances, how to stay healthy and how parents can join a new activity, access support or come to an event.



Family fun at the Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum's summer picnic at the Mile End Children's Play Park (see [page 27](#)).

Photo: Emily Jayne Nolan



Read the latest edition of the Families Matter magazine and monthly e-bulletin online at [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familiesmatter](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familiesmatter)

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## Welcome to the autumn edition of Families Matter

I hope you had a fantastic summer and joined some of the many family events which took place in parks and open spaces across the borough.

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

With the new academic year underway, and children and young people settling into their new schools, year groups and new routines, it is an opportunity for parents and carers to learn something new or join a group or activity.

On pages 6-7, you can find out about the Volunteering in Your Child's School course, which has already led to employment opportunities for many parents.

There is also information on how to join the Parent and Carer Council (PCC) or attend one of the Let's Talk SEND events to ensure your voice is heard and your experiences contribute to improving service design.

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

Best wishes,

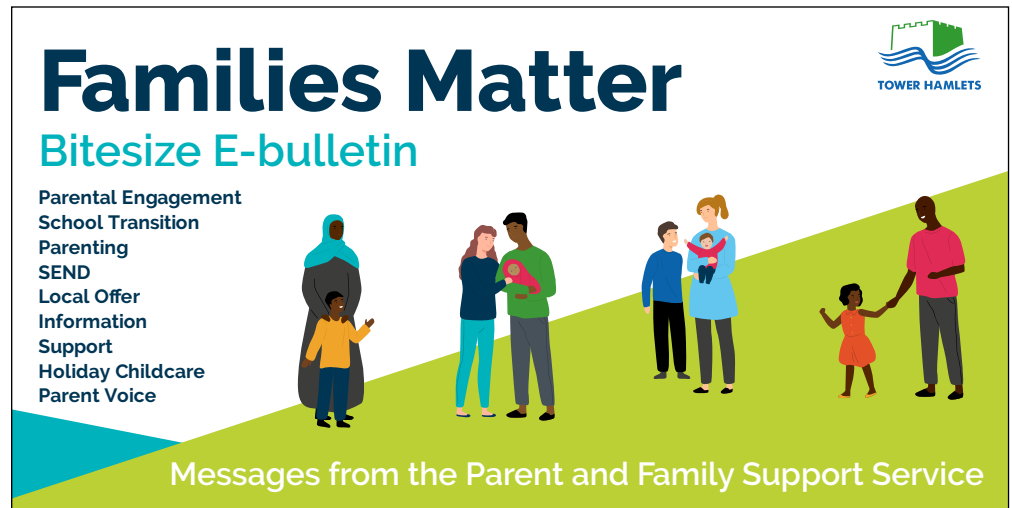
**Jill McGinley**  
Head of Parent and Family Support Service

## Working with families?

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

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

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



**Families Matter**  
Bitesize E-bulletin

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

Messages from the Parent and Family Support Service

## Families Matter: Bitesize E-bulletin

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

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

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

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

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Email: [fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk](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, siblings or other family members living in Tower Hamlets.*

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

# Working together for a Debt Free Tower Hamlets

Debt Free London is a partnership of 16 charities, led by Toynbee Hall, that provides free, expert advice to Londoners with problem debt.

Over the past 16 years, Debt Free London has supported Londoners through the Great Recession and the global pandemic and is now providing support during the current cost of living crisis.

Recent research conducted by the Money and Pension Service compared London to other regions in the UK and showed that Londoners are by far the most in need of support and advice, with 24% in a pre-crisis position and 27% in need of debt advice. This means that the majority of Londoners are either at risk or in strong need of support.

Last year in Tower Hamlets the charity provided support to 508 residents. The most common types of debt were rent arrears (33%), Council Tax arrears (30%) and credit card debt (26%). Both rent and Council Tax arrears are classified as 'priority debts', which can have serious consequences for the individual including the threat of bailiffs, homelessness or even imprisonment.



A Debt Free London volunteer talking to Londoners

Debt Free London provides advice via phone, WhatsApp, web chat, video or in person at one of their local advice centres to anyone who is struggling with or worried about debt in London.

If you or someone you know is worried about money or struggling to pay a debt, contact Debt Free London at:

Phone or WhatsApp message:

**0800 808 5700**

Web chat:

[www.debtfree.london](http://www.debtfree.london)

Video chat:

[www.debtfree.london/video](http://www.debtfree.london/video)

## Video advice kiosks

To support even more residents as the cost of living crisis hits household budgets, Debt Free London is rolling out video advice kiosks across London at community locations to provide Londoners with easy access to a debt advisor.

To find out more or how your school or organisation can be involved, contact [matt.dronfield@debtfree.london](mailto:matt.dronfield@debtfree.london)

## Help for households

**The government is offering help for households.**

To find out what cost of living support you could be eligible for visit [www.gov.uk/helpforhouseholds](http://www.gov.uk/helpforhouseholds)

Direct family support can be found [here](#).

**Help for Households**



## Help with the cost of childcare

Working parents or carers can get up to £500 every three months to help with the cost of childcare. Parents with a disabled child can get up to £1,000 every three months. This money can be used to pay for childminders, nurseries, playschemes and holiday clubs.

### How it works

- Parents set up an online childcare account.
- For every £8 they pay into this account, the government will pay £2.
- They can use this money to pay their childcare provider.
- Parents will need to reconfirm their details every three months.

### Who is eligible?

To get Tax-Free Childcare, parents need to be working at least 16 hours a week and earning at least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage. They can be self-employed, on maternity leave, paternal leave, sick leave or annual leave. Eligibility is until the September after their child's 11th birthday, or until their 17th birthday if they have a disability.

To find out more and check eligibility, visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## New legislation helps cut the cost of school uniforms

The [Education \(Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms\) Act 2021](#) provides new guidance on school uniform policies, which could save some parents hundreds of pounds this autumn.

The rule shake-up, which takes effect this month, will ensure schools keep expensive branded uniform items to a minimum, while encouraging parents to buy their uniforms from cheaper supermarkets or to set up their own second-hand clothing collectives.

Rules around competition and value for money are also being introduced which should also drive down the price for parents.

It is hoped that the new legislation will help cut the average cost of uniforms by £50, which will be a welcome relief to millions of households that are already struggling with the cost of living crisis.

### School clothing grant

Eligible families can apply for a school clothing grant. It helps towards the cost of a school uniform for children aged 11 who are changing from primary to secondary school. Only one grant is payable during a child's school life.

There is still time to apply – applications can be made up until 30 September, and in some circumstances late applications will also be considered.

To check eligibility for you or a family you are working with or to apply for the grant, click [here](#).





Clothes bank drop-in run by the Parental Engagement Team

## New partnership helps families with clothing costs

The start of the school year can be an expensive time for families with having to buy new school uniforms and warmer clothing for the changing season.

To support families who may be struggling with clothing costs, the Parental Engagement Team successfully partnered up with retail company, Childrensalon, which specialises in children's wear. The company recently donated surplus clothing to the team for distribution to families in need.

Families who were identified by family support practitioners as

those that would benefit most from this free clothing were invited to drop-in sessions at the Parents Advice Centre to select what they needed.

Professionals working with vulnerable families were also invited to come along to choose from a range of clothing basics that included school uniforms, coats and jackets.

A total of 76 children received new clothes.

“

**As a parent struggling financially at the moment, the clothes bank drop-in was a lifeline. I was able to pick some clothes for my three children. It helped me so much and they were happy to have some new clothes.**

Parent

”

# Explaining poverty to children

As the winter approaches and families become increasingly worried about paying bills and keeping the heating on, children will start to wonder what is going on. There may be a need to explain why they or their friends can't have certain things.

No doubt more authors will begin to address these issues in future stories, but below are two

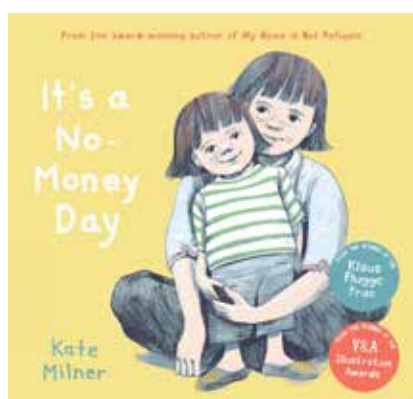
picture books for younger children and two fiction titles for older children that talk about families having no money and needing to visit food banks. These can act as a starter for conversations both at home and in the classroom or nursery.

Schools and nurseries can borrow these books from the [Tower Hamlets Schools Library Service](#) and parents can borrow them from [Idea Stores](#).

## Picture books for ages 4-7

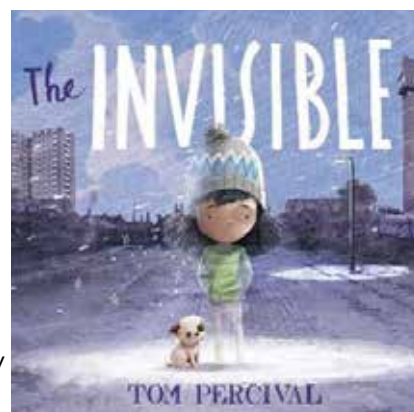
### **It's a No Money Day** by Kate Milner

There are fun things to do on no-money day, like go to the library or chase the pigeons, but when there is no money, a visit to the food bank is necessary. A gentle book from the author of 'My Name is Not Refugee'.



### **The Invisible** by Tom Percival

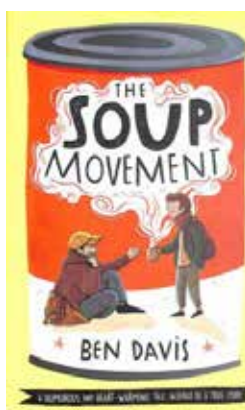
This is the story of Isobel whose family has to leave their home when the money runs out. Tom Percival tells, at the back of this book, how he grew up in poverty and wanted to write a story that told children who don't get enough food to eat, who are cold and tired, who feel invisible, that they DO belong in society.



## Fiction for ages 7 – 12

### **The Soup Movement** by Ben Davis

Giving his lunchtime soup away to a homeless man (not just because he wanted to do an act of kindness, but because he doesn't like the soup!) leads Jordan to realise how much hunger and poverty exists right under his nose and inspires him to start the Soup Movement.



### **The Great Food Bank Heist** by Onjali Rauf

Nelson and his little sister and mum have to rely on the food bank as mum's salary as a nurse is not enough. But there's a thief in town, and the stock of the food bank is disappearing, leaving families hungrier than ever. Onjali writes that she was inspired by Marcus Rashford's work on food poverty and some of the proceeds from sales are going to food charities.



Two other older titles are 'Getting Through Thursday' by Melrose Cooper and 'Girls Together' by Sherley Anne Williams, both from USA

Gillian Harris, Head of Tower Hamlets Schools Library Services  
Email: [gillian.harris@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.harris@towerhamlets.gov.uk) Website: [www.towerhamlets-sls.org.uk](http://www.towerhamlets-sls.org.uk)

# Moriyam's journey from volunteering into paid employment

“ I was looking for courses that would help me to work in primary schools – this was my aim. When the Volunteering in your Child's School course came up, I applied.

When I was offered a place – I was so excited. I thought to myself maybe this is my chance to fulfil my dreams.

The course helped me get a volunteer placement in a primary school. I was able to use my course to get the kind of roles I was interested in. My role as a volunteer was to support the teaching assistant and teacher in a Year 1 class. I

was supporting the whole class with phonics, maths and English. As time progressed, I gained their trust and respect and was given more responsibility and autonomy.

This September I will be working full time with the Year 2 class. The teacher and teaching assistant recommended me to the headteacher to give me a position in the school as a paid worker. I am ecstatic with the news – I couldn't believe it!

I tell myself that hard work really does pay off. Always believe in yourself and if you think your time is gone remember when the time is right it will all fall into



place. Look at me – a mother, eight years out of the job market and I was still able to work my way around to get what I want.”

**Moriyam**

## Volunteering in Your Child's School course



Parent volunteers working on an assignment for the Volunteering in Your Child's School course

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

Delivered by experienced practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, the course prepares parents for their role as a volunteer by giving them an insight into teaching and learning in school. Key topics include teaching and learning methods, the National and EYFS Curriculum, communication strategies, professionalism and safeguarding.

To find out more or to book the course for your school or setting email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

# More volunteers for schools this autumn

The pandemic has led many parents to reflect on their career aspirations and consider volunteering in school as a way to gain valuable experience. Schools have also been keen to recruit more volunteers either to assist with learning in the classroom or help out around the school.

To meet this increased interest, the Parental Engagement Team forged a successful partnership with [Icon College](#).

The partnership made it possible to offer a universal Volunteering in Your Child's School course, which was open to all parents with children in Tower Hamlets schools.

Parents completed the ten-week, Open College Network (OCN) accredited course in July and are now ready to start their volunteering journey in local schools this autumn.



Parent volunteers receiving their certificates



**Nazia Ahmed**  
Course tutor

"The partnership has meant there are more trained volunteers that are ready to support local schools this autumn."



**Dawn Thrower**  
Parent volunteer

"I learned lots of valuable information on how to support children in school. I will use this to nurture children and get the best from every child I work with."



**Xiaohui Lin**  
Parent volunteer

"The Volunteering in your Child's School course helped me link my experience and knowledge of working with children."



## Parent and Carer Council members support new research project

Parent and Carer Council (PCC) members, Emdad Islam and Mahabuba Rahman, have been using their experience of being active parent champions and community volunteers to inform some innovative research led by University College London (UCL).



Emdad Islam



Mahabuba Rahman

The research explores the barriers to research participation among people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Emdad and Mahabuba have been sharing their views on why, despite having worse health outcomes, individuals from lower socioeconomic groups are less frequently included in research.

They played key roles in the public engagement workshops held over the summer, sharing their experiences of being involved in research and exploring possible barriers to research participation.

The two PCC members continue to play a pivotal role in the project sharing the project outcomes across their networks in Tower Hamlets to encourage engagement in research.

More details on the research project [here](#).

Watch a short film on the project [here](#).

### Join the Parent and Carer Council (PCC)

The Parent and Carer Council (PCC) is a forum that helps shape the services that are available to families in the borough. Members of the forum get involved with local consultations, help identify gaps in support and discuss national issues that may be affecting families locally.

The summer meeting held in July included discussions on the Family Hub programme and the provision of childcare families need following the disruption of the pandemic.

**The next meeting is on Saturday 12 November.**

To join and for more information, email [parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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



## Volunteering opportunities in Tower Hamlets

Volunteering is a great way to make a real difference to your community. It's also a way to gain skills and experience, build your confidence and employability.

There are many volunteering opportunities available in Tower Hamlets.

The Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets can help you find interesting volunteer roles with local charities, community organisations or in the public sector.

The service it provides is open to people who live, work or study in Tower Hamlets. It has a variety of roles to suit all ages, backgrounds, interests and abilities.

To find out more or to register, visit the Volunteer Centre's website.

[www.vcth.org.uk](http://www.vcth.org.uk)

# Outdoor learning at Old Palace

Parents from **Old Palace Primary School** have been discovering the benefits of outdoor learning in a special workshop delivered by the Parental Engagement Team. Through group discussions, parents have been sharing their experiences and have noted how children today have fewer opportunities to play and learn outside.

Busier family life, combined with an increased sense of fear in society and accommodation with no outdoor space has resulted in families spending more time inside. The three-part course explores how this may be hampering children's social skills as well as risking stifling their long-term physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

In an effort to inspire the parents who took part, trips to local parks and outdoor spaces were an integral feature of the course.



Dad and child from Old Palace Primary School at the outdoor learning course

## Time to reset sleep routines for school

During the summer holidays, sleep patterns change. At the start of the school year, we often need to reset our routines so we can adjust to the early morning starts and demands of the school day. Follow these simple sleep hygiene tips to ensure everyone feels rested and ready for school.

### Move your body

Physical activity promotes sleep and reduces stress but remember to not exercise too close to bedtime as it can be over-stimulating and prevent sleep.



### Avoid too many extracurricular activities

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



should not be taken if they interfere with sleep at night. However, if your child needs to nap to function well for the rest of the day, try to keep the naps less than 30 minutes long.

### Avoid caffeine

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



### Limit napping

Napping in teenage years is linked to shorter and poorer sleep at night. Naps



# Professionals: Have your say on childcare

Tower Hamlets Council have commissioned Premier Advisory Group to complete a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment with the aim of improving childcare over the next five years. As part of this, they want to hear from all professionals involved in childcare including, but not limited to:

- Health visitors
- Midwives
- Parent and family support workers
- Social workers
- School staff
- Employees of the Family Information Service
- Other professionals working with families and/or involved in childcare, including those in management positions.

They have created a survey which can be found at:

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChildcareStakeholderSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChildcareStakeholderSurvey)



Your contribution to this is vital for shaping childcare in Tower Hamlets and should not take longer than 15 minutes.

**The deadline for responses is Friday 14 October.**

If you have any questions, please contact:

Jack Price-Darbyshire

Email: [jack.pricedarbyshire@premieradvisory.co.uk](mailto:jack.pricedarbyshire@premieradvisory.co.uk)

Please note: **If you are a childminder or run a day care setting then there is also a survey designed specifically for you.** Please book a timeslot to speak to a member of Premier Advisory Group using the link below:

<https://bit.ly/TowerHamletsSurveySandroS>  
to speak to Sandro

<https://bit.ly/TowerHamletsSurveyEniolaE>  
to speak to Eniola

## Sustainable travel accreditation scheme for London schools

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

Sign up your school or setting to the STARS scheme to help us all move towards a healthier, less congested London. For more details or to sign up to the STARS scheme, click [here](#).



## Young Workpath: results day

Guidance on what young people can do next in terms of further education or other options can be found [here](#).

YOUNG TOWER HAMLETS  
**WORKPATH** →  
CONNECTING PEOPLE TO POTENTIAL



# School applications are now open

**Don't miss the deadlines for admission to secondary, primary and nursery schools.**

<p><b>Secondary admissions</b> For children born between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012</p>	<b>31 October 2022</b>
<p><b>Primary admissions</b> For children born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019</p>	<b>15 January 2023</b>
<p><b>Nursery admissions</b> For children born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020</p>	<b>16 February 2023</b>

Complete your application online at [www.eadmissions.org.uk](http://www.eadmissions.org.uk)

For more information about how to apply, scan the QR code or visit [towerhamlets.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://towerhamlets.gov.uk/schooladmissions)

[school.admissions@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:school.admissions@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

020 7364 5006



SCAN ME



# Results from the Pupil Attitude Survey 2022

The Tower Hamlets Pupil Attitude Survey (PAS) took place in spring 2022. Views were captured from 1,516 primary school pupils and 271 secondary school pupils. The survey focused on views and experiences around health and wellbeing, staying safe, the use of technology, local community and plans for the future.

## Results from the 2022 survey included:

**65%** of primary school pupils think parks and play areas in their area are good.

**46%** of secondary school students think parks and play areas in their area are good.

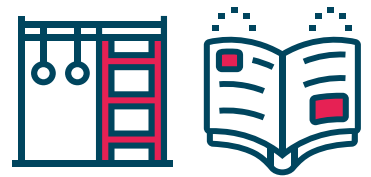


**86%** of primary school pupils say they feel safe in the area where they live.

**73%** of secondary school students say they feel safe in the area where they live.



The most popular free time activities for both primary and secondary school students were going to a local park or playground or reading



Two reports about the survey results have now been produced and are available [here](#). The insight gained from the survey is being shared across the council, with partner organisations and through partnership groups. The council is currently working with partners to develop an action plan in response to the survey findings. For more information, email [tracy.stanley@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.stanley@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Share your experience of maternity care

The Tower Hamlets Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) helps parents provide feedback on their maternity experience. Their aim is to make the voices of Tower Hamlets parents heard and to encourage parent involvement in improving maternity services.

The partnership does this as a working group of parents and healthcare professionals, using the voice of new parents to help drive change.

They also gather people's experiences of maternity care by visiting local hospitals, community centres and parent meet-ups. Using feedback, they identify issues, find solutions and bring about change.

MVP is looking for passionate voices to help them – whether it's providing feedback on personal experience or volunteering as a member.

Membership involves attending meetings and providing feedback on local maternity projects or initiatives whenever you can.

To find out more about MVP or to share your experiences of maternity care visit [www.maternityvoices.com](http://www.maternityvoices.com)

# Updated Healthy Families programme launches

A refreshed Healthy Families programme will be delivered in schools, children and family centres and community venues across the borough this academic year.

Parents are placed at the heart of the newly revised programme because they play such a key role in influencing the health of the entire family. They will be encouraged to identify areas in their own lifestyle that are working well and things that need to change. It is from here that parents can begin to make lasting changes to improve their family's health.

The programme, delivered by specialist practitioners from the Parental Engagement Team, will inspire parents with healthy eating tips and more cost-effective ways to prepare meals from scratch.

Over the five-week programme, parents will learn how they can encourage their family to become more active and how to read food labels to find out the nutritional value of the food they are buying.

Parents can refer themselves onto the programme or schools and settings can book a programme.



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

## Healthy packed lunch ideas for new term

All children benefit from having a healthy free school dinner, but if they are having a packed lunch, follow these inspiring lunch box tips devised by the Parental Engagement Team and get the new term off to a healthy start.

### Keep them fuller for longer

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



### Introduce more wholegrains

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



### Ditch the sugary snacks

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



### Choose lower fat options

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



### Get the children involved

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



### Be careful with dried fruit

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



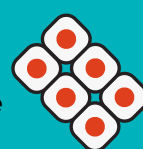
### Check your cheese for fat and salt

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



### Be creative and adventurous

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



# Polio booster vaccine for children

Following the discovery of the polio virus in sewage in north and east London, a booster polio vaccine is being offered to all children aged 1-9 in London.

The polio vaccine is very effective, but the number of children vaccinated in London is currently lower than it should be. The polio virus in London should not pose any risk to those who are fully vaccinated, but there is a small chance that those who have not been fully vaccinated, or those who do not respond well to vaccines, could be at risk of catching polio.

For some children, the polio booster vaccine may be an extra dose on top of their routine vaccinations. For other children, it may bring them up-to-date with their routine vaccinations.



After this extra dose, children will still need to complete or catch up on the routine doses at the recommended age.

Parents/carers of children who are eligible for an extra dose will be contacted by the NHS to book an appointment.

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

## The Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum



The Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum is a charity that aims to raise awareness of mental health issues. The forum organises awareness events that challenge the stigma attached to mental health within the community and provides information on local mental health services.

They also provide one-to-one sessions, both online and in person. The sessions are led by Bengali-speaking advocates who can refer to additional services if needed.

### One-to-one Information Service

In person at:

**Harford Health Centre**  
**115 Harford Street, E1 4FG**  
**Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am**

Over the phone:

**Thursdays, 10am-12noon**  
**Tel: 07871 927 324**

[www.bangladeshimentalhealth.org](http://www.bangladeshimentalhealth.org)

## Flu jab protection this winter

The flu jab will be available to eligible adults from mid-September. You will be able to get it at local pharmacies and GPs throughout the borough.

Those eligible include:

- 65+-year-olds
- People with long-term health conditions
- Pregnant women
- 50-64-year-olds
- Frontline health and social care workers
- Close contacts of residents with weakened immune systems

Vaccines are the best protection against a number of serious illnesses, which can not only have a serious effect on our health, but also add significant pressure on the NHS.

The best time to get the flu jab is in the autumn, which is usually before the flu starts spreading.

### Children

In addition to our most vulnerable adults, the flu vaccine will be also be offered to children this year as follows:

- Children aged 2-3 via their GP
- All primary school aged children plus secondary school children in Years 7-9 via their school

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



# Internet safety for back to school

Here's what families can do to make the best of the internet while staying safe this school year.

## 1. Don't forget to set up new passwords for the new school year

Back-to-school season is a good time to update passwords. It's important to teach children the basics of password hygiene, including keeping passwords in a safe place and regularly changing them.

## 2. Check privacy settings on all your family's devices

Whether it's a child starting at nursery who uses the family tablet to watch videos or an older child who is getting their first mobile phone this autumn,

make sure to set up these devices with data privacy in mind.

## 3. Remind children not to give out personal information

The start of the school year is often a time children join new gaming or social media platforms. It's also a good time to remind them not to give out personal information.

## 4. Discuss parental controls with the whole family

No tool can completely protect children online. Parents should

talk to their children about why they need to use parental controls. They should also figure out a plan to ease restrictions as children get older and learn how to manage themselves online.

## 5. Get the family together and make a family agreement

It can help to talk about values first, then make a family agreement together where you can put those values into practice. It's useful to have a written agreement where the whole family lists what they agree to do.



# Five things parents should know about screen time

## 1. Not all screen time is the same



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

## 2. Set limits for screen time



Most parents will want to set some kind of limit. Around one to two hours daily during the week and a bit longer at the weekends is considered about right for teens.

Younger children aged four-seven years should probably spend no more than an hour a day online – this can go up to around an hour and a half as they get older.

## 3. Boundaries work if you stick to them



Get children involved in the process so that they understand why setting limits is important.

Once you've agreed the limits, stick to them, but bear in mind that teens might need to spend longer online to complete their homework.



## 4. Look out for negative effects



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

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

## 5. Have family screen time together



Although it is good to set aside time when the family is not using screens, this doesn't mean that parents can't get involved in using screens with their children.

If parents take an interest in what their children like to do online, children are more likely to ask for guidance if something goes wrong, or they make a mistake along the way.

## Keeping Children Safe Online programme continues

The Parental Engagement's Team's Keeping Children Safe Online programme has successfully completed its first year of delivery. The free online safety sessions give parents an insight into their child's online world while providing some useful tips to help keep children safe while using the internet.

There have been over 80 sessions delivered, either in person or online, in nurseries, primary and secondary schools and through community networks including the Somali Parent and Carer Network, Parent and Carer Council and the Hummingbird Hub for foster carers.

920 parents so far have taken the course and 100 per cent of those who have completed an evaluation said that they would recommend it to others and that they are now more confident talking to their children about internet safety.

To book a session for your school or setting email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

“

A very insightful and informative session. It's given us the confidence to talk about some of the risks with our children.

Parent

”

## Keeping Children Safe Online in Years 6 and 7



Towards the end of primary school and the start of secondary school is a time when many children get their first mobile phone. They may start to become more active online, often joining social media platforms or gaming sites for the first time. The internet can be an amazing resource for them, allowing them to play, learn, create and connect and opening up a world of exciting possibilities. But these new freedoms can also provide some

risks and it's important parents stay informed so that they can protect their children from online dangers.

The Parental Engagement Team have devised a special online safety session to help. The discussion-based session, developed specially for parents with children in Years 6 and 7, will give parents a chance to share their experiences of parenting in the digital age. They will gain an insight into their child's online world and learn how to manage screen time conflict as well as pick up some useful online safety tips.

**Platform to Talk**  
**Keeping Children Safe Online in Year 6 and 7**  
**Friday 16 September, 10- 11am**  
**Delivered online through Zoom**

Register for the Platform to Talk session [here](#).

### New Keeping Children Safe Online videos

The internet is a fantastic resource that opens up a world of possibilities, but many parents feel out of touch with their child's online world and worry about online dangers.

The Parental Engagement Team have created two new videos to help that will be shown on plasma screens in schools, family centres and community settings. The short videos, which have been co-produced with families, aim to provide an insight into their child's online world while providing parents with some

practical tips to help keep children safe. Find the videos at the links below

- [Keeping Children Safe Online Children, Parents & School Voices](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe Online \(Parental Engagement Team advice for parents\)](#)

Thank you to all the parents and children who took part. To show the video in your school or setting, email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

# Tower Hamlets Parent and Family Support Service

## Parenting programmes

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

PROGRAMME	AGE RANGE	INFORMATION
<b>Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC)</b>	2-18 years	Aims to increase parental self-esteem and confidence and reduce child behavioural difficulties. Five sessions, shortened version adapted for online. Also available in Bengali and Somali. Evening programme in English. Thirteen weekly sessions.
<b>Triple P Teen</b>	12-18 years	For parents to build positive relationships with their teenager or for those who have concerns about problem behaviour, non-cooperation and aggression or wish to prevent behavioural problems from developing. Nine weekly sessions.
<b>Triple P Group</b>	2-11 years	For parents who wish to build positive relationships with their child, increase self-confidence and develop their skills and techniques for dealing with difficult behaviour. Eight weekly sessions.
<b>Triple P Family Transitions</b>	All parents	For parents who are experiencing personal distress after separation or divorce, which is impacting on their parenting. Six weekly sessions.
<b>Triple P Online</b>	2-11 years & 12-18 years	An individual online programme for parents to access and complete at their own pace. Practitioner support and guidance to complete the programme is available on request.
<b>Emotional First Aid</b>	All parents	Offers an overview of mental health and wellbeing in relation to parenting. Learn strategies to manage anxieties, identify stress factors, gain a better understanding of ourselves and promote a healthier sense of wellbeing. Six weekly sessions.
<b>Speakeasy</b>	5-18 years	For parents to develop the skills and confidence to talk to their children about growing up, relationships and keeping safe. Explores how Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is taught in schools and the influence on children from media and peers. Four weekly sessions.
<b>The Parent Factor in ADHD</b>	5-16 years	A programme for parents with children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The course will cover information to help understand the diagnosis and treatment, strategies to support your child and manage difficult behaviour and how to advocate on your child's behalf within the education system. Nine weekly sessions.

### Triple P discussion groups

For parents of children aged 2-11 years

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

For parents of children aged 12-18 years

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

#### Get in touch

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

To book a place or to make a referral download a referral form, scan the QR code or click or visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes)



## Parenting discussion one-off workshops

Parenting discussion one-off workshops have been designed to offer a safe space to discuss shared concerns on specific parenting issues. These sessions allow parents to identify their current challenges and explore strategies to improve the parenting experience, as well as promoting their children's development. Email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

DATE	WORKSHOP	AGE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Tuesday 27 September</b> 10am-12noon Zoom	<b>Preparing for Adolescence</b>	10-12 years	For parents who would like to receive support and advice on preparing for when children transition to the teenage years.
<b>Thursday 6 October</b> 10am	<b>Keeping Children Safe Online</b>	2-18 years	Introduces parents to a child's online world and raises awareness of how children can become vulnerable to bullying, exploitation and extremist activity online.
<b>Tuesday 18 October</b> 10am-12noon Zoom	<b>Parenting Support Group</b>	All parents	Termly sessions offered to parents who have completed a parenting course and would like ongoing support to implement learning at home.
<b>Thursdays 3 November 1 December</b> 10.30am-12.30pm Zoom	<b>Parenting for Single Parents</b>	All parents	Monthly sessions for single parents to build their support network and explore ways to enhance their self-care.
<b>Tuesday 13 December</b> 10-12.30pm	<b>Triple P Teen discussion group – reducing family conflict</b>	12-18 years	From the Positive Parenting Programme series. This workshop is for parents who would like support to reduce conflict with teenagers in the home.

For more details and to join a session email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Tower Hamlets Family Hubs

### What are Family Hubs?

Family Hubs are a new way of bringing together all the support families may need from birth-19 (or 25 if they have special educational needs and disabilities). They are a way of joining up to improve access to services – the connections between families, professionals, service providers – and putting relationships at the heart of family help.

### Shared vision

Every child, young person and family feels included in their communities, is happy and healthy, and can easily get any

help they need to thrive and reach their potential.

### Shared mission

Early Help in Tower Hamlets is delivered through a Family Hub approach. They are a community of families and services that are working together to provide timely support for families by helping create opportunities to improve the lives of children.

### What are they doing?

They are currently in the first stage of the Family Hub development process. They are gathering information to outline the needs of children,

young people and families and engaging with stakeholders to understand how best Family Hubs can meet their needs.

For more information, visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familyhubs](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/familyhubs)



# Co-parenting support for separated parents

Separation and divorce can cause tensions in family relationships, but with the right support, it is possible to co-parent successfully with ex partners. The six week Triple P Family Transitions programme helps separated parents manage conflict and develop a more cooperative approach to parenting.

**Triple P - Family Transitions**  
**Wednesdays,**  
**2 November - 7 December**  
**10am-12.30pm**  
**Delivered in person in E1**



For more details and to book a place, email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)



## Emotional First Aid course for parents

This is a 6-week course that helps parents to understand their own emotional needs so that they can develop positive emotional health.

The course helps parents to notice the early signs of stress and encourages them to identify things that could enhance their emotional wellbeing. Parents have the chance to share their experiences with other parents and pick up some practical self-care tips that are the foundations to good mental health.

**Fridays**  
**16 September - 21 October**  
**10am-12.30pm**

**Wednesdays**  
**9 November - 14 December**  
**10am-12.30pm**

**Delivered in person in E1**

For more details or to join the course, email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) course for parents

This is a ten-week parenting programme for parents of children aged 5-16 with a clinical diagnosis of ADHD. Parents will be able to share their experiences of parenting a child with ADHD with other parents and pick up some useful tips.

**The Parent Factor in ADHD**  
**Thursdays**  
**22 September –**  
**24 November**  
**7pm-9pm**  
**Delivered in person in E1**

For more details or to join the programme, email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Online parent support networks

Parents who complete a parenting programme may still benefit from additional support and a safe space to share their experiences with other parents. The Parenting Team have an online support group just for this.

Parents are given a chance to meet other parents, boost their wellbeing while picking up even more parenting tips.

**Next meeting**  
**Tuesday 18 October**  
**10am-12noon**  
**Delivered online via Zoom**



For more details or to book your place, email [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Parenting programmes booklet update

A new parenting programme booklet with details of the courses available to support parents has been produced by the Parenting Team.

For more information and to download the brochure visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes)

A limited number of paper copies are available. These can be requested by emailing [parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk) or calling **020 7364 6398**.



## Children in care services praised by Ofsted

Children in care in Tower Hamlets are living in placements that are meeting their individual needs well and are helping to improve their experiences and progress, an inspection by Ofsted in July has found. In their first visit to Tower Hamlets since the pandemic, Ofsted inspectors looked at arrangements for children in care and reported:

- Children have committed social workers who build positive relationships with them and understand their needs and wishes
- Senior officers and elected members have high aspirations to improve services
- Children receive effective education support, enabling them to reach their potential
- Leaders and managers are creative and innovative in addressing children's need for stability.

Read the summary of the findings [here](#).

FamiliesMatter

### Parenting Programmes in Tower Hamlets

[parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk)  
 020 7364 6398  
[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes)

# Platform to Talk new programme launched

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

## Keeping Safe Online in Year 6 and 7

**Friday 16 September**  
**10-11am**

As the new term begins many children in Years 6 and 7 will be getting their first mobile phone. In this online session, you will discover how to keep children safe at a time when they are becoming more active online.



## Building Strong Identities

**Friday 7 October**  
**10-11am**

To mark October's Black History Month, this session explores the importance of belonging, culture and identity. Join the conversation and discover how these elements can really enrich your child's learning and self-esteem.



## Stand Up to Bullying

**Friday 11 November**  
**10-11am**

Join this special Anti-Bullying Week session to become more aware about bullying and the effect it can have on children and young people's mental health. You will pick up some useful tips on responding to bullying and discover ways we can all help prevent it.



## Keeping Children Safe Online

**Friday 9 December**  
**10-11am**

The internet is amazing, but do you worry about how safe your child is online? Join this informative session to find out more about your child's online world and pick up some useful tips to help keep them safe.



## Encouraging Good Eating Habits

**Friday 13 January**  
**10-11am**

Many children can be fussy about the food they eat and it can be a source of anxiety for parents. In this session, you will be able share your experiences with other parents and pick up helpful tips to make mealtimes less stressful for everyone.



## Supporting Children's Mental Health

**Friday 10 February**  
**10-11am**

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



# Platform to Talk new programme launched

## Revise Wise

Friday 10 March  
10-11am

Revision is key to making learning stick, yet many students don't know how to do it well. Discover how to support students to develop good learning habits. You will learn the most effective revision methods to ensure students perform at their best during exams.



## Supporting Students Through Exams

Friday 28 April  
10-11am

Students need to feel well to perform at their best during exams. You will discover ways to help boost their wellbeing including how to manage stress. You will also pick up the best exam techniques that could make all the difference to their grades.



## Self-Care for Mental Health

Friday 12 May  
10-11am

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



## Growing Up and Change

Friday 16 June  
10-11am

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



## Good Start at Secondary School

Friday 13 January  
10-11am

Help your child get off to the best possible start at secondary school by attending this informative session. Learn how to help your child manage any anxiety they may be feeling and pick up some practical tips so that everything goes as smoothly as possible in September.



To browse the Platform to Talk collection or to register for a session, [click here](#).





## Let's Talk SEND Updates and Information

Information on previous and upcoming Let's Talk SEND events and updates on the borough's SEND improvement journey can be found on the [Local Offer](#).

# SEND Annual Report

The 2021-22 annual report of the SEND Improvement Board is now available to view on the Local Offer page via the following link [here](#).



The Annual Report 2021-22 sets out how the SEND Improvement Board and local partners have been working together to deliver on the priorities set out in the [SEND Strategy \(2020-24\)](#). It also highlights work to address the four areas of significant weakness identified in the [inspection](#) carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality

Commission (CQC) in June/July 2021.

The report is organised around the five priorities of the SEND Strategy, including 'You Said We Did' examples which demonstrate where feedback from parents and young people has impacted the way we deliver services. The report also includes two case studies setting out where good practice and collaborative working has made a difference to young people with SEND and their parents.

**Steve Nyakatawa**  
**Director of Education**  
**London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Let us know what you would like to see in our next 'Spotlight On...' as part of the termly Let's Talk SEND supplement. Email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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

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

More information on the support available to families can be found [here](#).

# Introduction to the SEN Service

The SEN service undertakes the Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process which is the route to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We ensure that a child or young person's initial needs are properly considered, and whether they have special educational needs requiring an EHCP.

We are working to ensure that our SEN offer, assessments, placements and provision is the best it can be. SEN in Tower Hamlets is going through its greatest change ever. We have expanded the service to ensure that we deliver our statutory duties on new assessments and Annual Reviews, including our Educational Psychology Service.

We are changing all our formats and paperwork, requests, advice, EHCPs, and Annual Reviews to make them more accessible and tailored to the needs of our children and young people. Our system of assessment and planning will now more directly involve families, as well as the children and young people themselves.

We are preparing again for school phase transfer. Last year, 83% of children were placed in their first preference school. We are changing our process slightly to speed up the information we give to parents and schools. We want to give as much time as possible to secure the right placement for our children and young people. Information on this will be shared at our transition events as well as on the Local Offer.

SEN in Tower Hamlets is changing for the better, and I look forward to telling you more about each element over time.

**Lewis Teasdale**  
**SEN Service Manager**  
 Email: [lewis.teasdale@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:lewis.teasdale@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Educating families and professionals on neurovariance

Barts Health and Phoenix Primary and Secondary School delivered a training session in July. The session covered how to identify autism, basic interventions, and the experience of parents. A local parent also spoke at the session giving valuable insight into families' experiences of using local services.

The session was attended by over 120 families and professionals from health, social care, schools and early years.

Another training session will be held on **11 October 2022**.

Details will be posted on the newly developed [Local Offer webpage](#), which also provides key information relating to autism and neurovariance.



# SEND Support Group

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

### For more information contact:

Tower Hamlets & City SEND IASS, 30 Greatorex Street,  
 Whitechapel, London E1 5NP

☎ **020 7364 6489**

✉ **TowerHamlets&City.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk**

🐦 **@TH\_IASS**

🌐 **<https://www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com>**

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



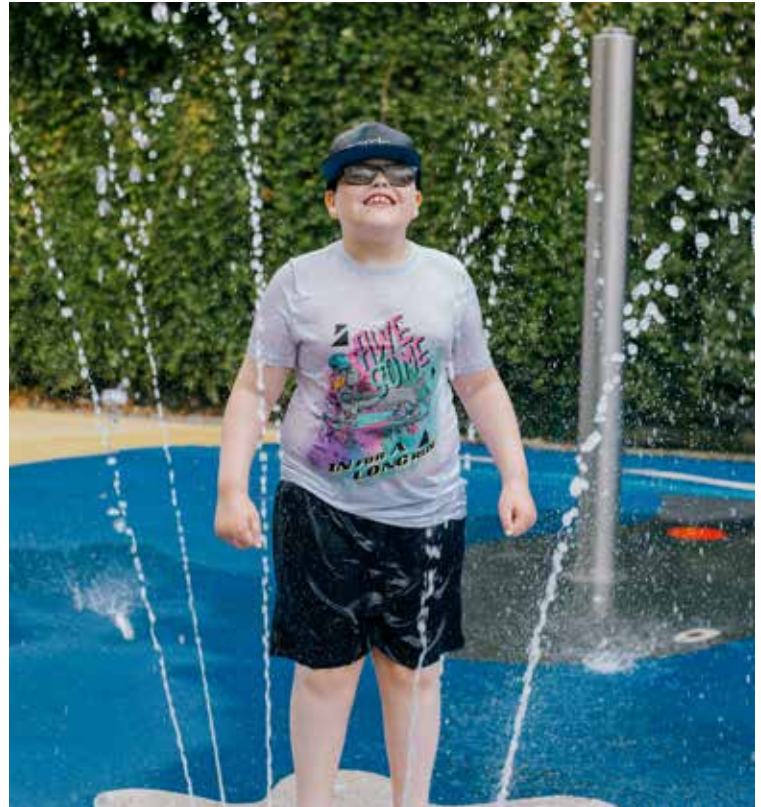
## The Independent SEND Parent Forum family picnic

The Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum held an inclusive family fun picnic in July. The event took place in Mile End Play Park and was attended by children with SEND and their families.

The children explored the natural environment, wildlife and sensory materials like sand and water. They enjoyed a range of stimulating activities, such as go kart racing, arts and crafts and much more.

The forum would like to thank the Tower Hamlets Parks Team, Arts & Events Team, Crisp Street Children & Family Centre, the Parent and Family Support Service and the Mile End East and Bromley by Bow Health Community Interest Company for their help and commitment to the event alongside the forum parent volunteers.

To find out more or to join the forum, visit [www.thsendforum.co.uk](http://www.thsendforum.co.uk)



Fun at the family picnic. Photo: Emily Jayne Nolan

## Tower Hamlet Independent SEND Parent Forum

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



**Make sure your voice counts! Have your say!**

Education  
Health and  
Care Plans  
(EHCP)

Transport

Health and  
social care

Short  
breaks

Education

Transition

Post 16

**and much more.**

Join other parents and carers of children and young people with SEND (0-25 years) for coffee and talk about the issues that are important to you. For more information, email [thesendforum@gmail.com](mailto:thesendforum@gmail.com), call 07498 573872 or find us on Twitter [@ThsendF](https://twitter.com/ThsendF).

[www.thsendforum.co.uk](http://www.thsendforum.co.uk)

# DLR Ambassadors make dreams come true for Zakariyah

**Parent and Carer Council** member, Neherun Nessa Ali, worked with the Parental Engagement Team and the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) Ambassador Team to provide a great experience for her son who is a big fan of the DLR.

“Transport for London (TFL) is an integral part of my son's (Zakariyah) life and he describes his special tour of the DLR with the DLR Ambassadors as the best day of his life.

Zakariyah is autistic and can't keep his attention focussed for too long, but the DLR Ambassadors were absolutely amazing on the day. They were so creative in how they managed to keep him engaged. Each one of the team has made such a difference to his experience of the DLR. They were all so attentive and helped make the experience so special for him.

The tour was like a dream come true for Zakariyah. He always pretends to be a train driver and having the opportunity to make announcements on the DLR left him feeling ecstatic with joy. The whole experience has helped him develop more confidence with his social interaction. Thank you all so much – I can't express my gratitude enough for the experience.

**Neherun Nessa Ali**  
Zakariyah's mum



## SEND Young Peoples Zone

Find out about services that offer information and advice around education, apprenticeships and employment for young people aged 16 years old and over.

- [Useful resources for Moving On Post 16](#)
- [Post 16: Transport to Education and Training - Statutory Guidance](#)
- [Useful Videos](#)

- [Videos made by Young People for Young People](#)
- [Our Time Forum top 5 priorities 2022](#)

Visit the SEND Young People's Zone [here](#).

# Holiday Childcare Scheme celebrates national Playday

The theme of this year's national Playday was 'All to play for – building play opportunities for all children'. The event was celebrated at the Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme in August with a range of activities that demonstrated that play is for everyone, happens everywhere and is the right of every child.

Play is at the heart of the scheme – it forms the basis for all activities because it gives children the freedom to make mistakes and try out their own ideas.

As part of national Playday, staff and children celebrated the power of play with stimulating activities that appealed to all ages – from the traditional egg and spoon race and tug of war to more open ended, child-centred activities. Skilled play workers were on hand to support and encourage children as they collaborated and developed their creative thinking.



Children playing tug of war as part of national Playday



Children receiving medals for their play achievements as part of national Playday celebrations

For information on the boroughs playgrounds and inclusive play for all families click [here](#). Remember to visit the [Local Offer](#) for activity ideas.

## Need childcare over the October half term holiday?

The Tower Hamlets Holiday Childcare Scheme is Ofsted registered and provides childcare for children aged 3 to 13. The next scheme takes place during the October half term:

**Monday 24 October-  
Friday 28 October  
St Anne's and Guardian Angels  
Catholic Primary School  
Underwood Road  
Whitechapel, E1 5AW**

Bookings open on:

- **20 September at 12noon** – for working parents living in the borough
- **4 October at 12noon** – for non-working parents living in the borough
- **11 October at 12noon** – for parents living outside the borough

For more details visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/hcs)



## Doorstep Library's Online Reading Corner

The Online Reading Corner are free reading sessions hosted by Doorstep Library every week during term time. The sessions are delivered via Zoom by a team of volunteers who share stories, sing songs and explore the magic of books.

There are reading sessions for children up to the age of 11 as well as special Read and Play sessions for younger children up to the age of four. For children under five, an adult must be present throughout the session.

More details and register [here](#).



## Family Learning Festival 2022 15-30 October 2022

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



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

This year's festival hopes to inspire a love of shared learning through curiosity. Schools, children's centres, libraries and museums will be putting on creative events to showcase family learning.

To find out more, visit [www.familylearningfestival.com](http://www.familylearningfestival.com)

## Support for Ukrainian Families

For information on the support available for Ukrainian families who have recently arrived in the borough, including information on the Barnardo's Ukrainian Support Helpline, visit the Tower Hamlets [website](#).



## Making music in Tower Hamlets

Making music, either by yourself or with others, has many benefits and can help support young people's wellbeing. The Tower Hamlets Arts & Music Education Service (THAMES) provides opportunities for children and young people to learn a musical instrument and express themselves by taking part in choirs, ensembles and projects both in and out of school including:

- Children's Choir – Mondays after school (7–11-year-olds)
- Wednesday Music Centre – Wednesdays after school (7–11-year-olds, who are beginners, already learning an instrument)
- Saturday Music Centre – Saturday mornings, (7-18-year-old instrumentalists who are grade 1+ standard, and singers of all abilities)
- Saturdays, fortnightly (11-25-year-olds) – Soundbox inclusive ensemble for disabled and non-disabled young people.
- Youth Orchestra – during school holidays, 11-21-year-olds who are grade 5+ instrumentalists.

Sessions are either free or subsidised and open to all children and young people who live or go to school in Tower Hamlets.

For more details visit the THAMES website [here](#).

Get inspired with THAMES performances [here](#).

# Training and events calendar

## Induction to other agencies

These are bite-sized sessions that introduce professionals to a range of organisations that can help in your work with families. To book your session visit the [Learning Hub](#) and enter 'Induction to other agencies' in the search bar.

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Tuesday 27 September 2-3.30m	<b>Induction to Eva Armsby Family Centre</b> An overview of the centre's three main areas of work – the Positive Change Service, working with those affected by domestic abuse; the Parenting Assessment Service; and the Contact Service.

For more information, contact Marie Larvin. Email: [marie.larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:marie.larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

## Parental engagement information and training for professionals

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Tuesday 11 October 10-11am	<b>Positive Partnerships with Parents (online)</b> This session for <b>school leaders</b> provides an opportunity to reflect on the current position and challenges associated with effective parental engagement, gain insight and best practice from schools across the borough and consider a parental engagement health check to assess your school's capacity to reimagine parental engagement and partnership with parents.  For more information, email <a href="mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk">parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
Wednesday 19 October 10-11.30am	<b>Parental Engagement – Professionals Network Meeting (online)</b> The Parental Engagement Network provides an opportunity for all staff working with parents in school to share experiences and strategies to better engage parents in their child's learning, development and school life. The meetings include key themes and topics and local and national updates to support your work.  To book your place, email <a href="mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk">parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>

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

Your guide to information and services for families in Tower Hamlets



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



## Parental engagement information and training for parents

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
Fridays 16 September 7 October 11 November 9 December 10-11am	<p><b>Platform to Talk online sessions</b></p> <p>These virtual sessions cover a range of topical issues from health and wellbeing to family life, parenting, school and more.</p> <p>To book your place, click <a href="#">here</a>.                      For more details, email <a href="mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk">parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a></p>
Saturday 12 November 10.30am-1.30pm	<p><b>Parent and Carer Council virtual meeting</b></p> <p>The borough's main family forum to support borough-wide consultation with parents and carers. <a href="http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil">www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil</a></p>
Tuesdays 4 October 8 November 13 December 10 January 2023 11am-1pm	<p><b>Somali Parents and Carers Network virtual meetings</b></p> <p>This network meets monthly and provides opportunities for Somali parents and carers to discuss key issues around education, health and wellbeing, get information and hear from guest speakers.</p>
Thursdays 10am-12noon Term time only	<p><b>SEND Parent Support Group</b></p> <p>The group offers parents and carers of children or young people with additional needs/disabilities support and information around key themes/relevant issues and an opportunity to meet other parents and carers of children with SEND.</p> <p>To find out more email: <a href="mailto:TowerHamletsCity.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk">TowerHamletsCity.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a></p>
Tuesday 8 November 10.30am-1pm	<p><b>Let's Talk SEND: Information Sessions for Families</b></p> <p>An opportunity for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND to hear from senior leaders about the Local Area SEND system and find out more about plans following the SEND Local Area Inspection.</p>
Wednesday 9 November 5.30-6.45pm  Zoom	<p>Parents and carers can also share their experiences to help improve communication throughout the SEND system. Parents of children on SEN support or with an Education, Health and Care Plan are welcome to attend.</p> <p>For more information contact:                      Family Information Service                      Tel: 020 7364 6495                      Email: <a href="mailto:TowerHamlets&amp;City.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk">TowerHamlets&amp;City.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a></p>

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

## Useful contacts

A list of local and national advice services, providing free information for Tower Hamlets residents on welfare benefits, debt, housing and other matters can be found on the council website [here](#).

A number of specialist advice agencies and solicitors firms also provide legal aid services to eligible clients.