



## An introduction from the Divisional Director of Education

My role as Divisional Director of Education enables me to visit all schools and settings in Tower Hamlets, meet school leaders and regularly hear from parents.

There are many things I am proud of. Our schools have some of the best outcomes in the country. We know there are improvements to be made to ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families receive the best support possible.

Following the Local Area Inspection undertaken jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in June last year, work is underway to ensure the support that we offer to children who have SEND and their families is at the forefront of our improvement journey.

The Let's Talk SEND events and this supplement in the termly Families Matter magazine will provide a new opportunity for your experiences to inform service improvement. I hope to meet many parents over the coming year at events which will take place across the borough.



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

# An introduction from the Divisional Director for Education continued

Last year between 28 June and 2 July 2021, Ofsted and the CQC conducted a joint inspection of Tower Hamlets to judge our effectiveness in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection report was published in September 2021 – you can find out more and read the inspection letter on our Local Offer pages:

[www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/blog\\_articles/3259-joint-area-send-inspection-in-tower-hamlets](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/blog_articles/3259-joint-area-send-inspection-in-tower-hamlets)

The local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have been working hard to address the four areas identified for improvement. These are:

1. The poor quality and oversight of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) including the annual review process
2. The lengthy waiting times for an assessment and diagnosis of ASD (autism spectrum disorder)
3. Fragmentation in the provision of speech and language therapy
4. Weaknesses in communication between area leaders and parents

In November 2021, we launched the 'Let's Talk' sessions to consider what can be done to address the issues raised by the inspection. I would like to thank parents and carers who contributed to the Let's Talk SEND sessions.

These sessions are informing the local area's Written Statement of Action following the Ofsted and CQC inspection. More information about the sessions can be found on page 22.

We will be holding Let's Talk SEND sessions on a regular basis, at least once each term. Details will be posted on the Local Offer and in the Families Matter magazine. The aim of the sessions is for you to engage with local area leaders, our SEND improvement journey and improve communication.

We look forward to meeting parents and carers at the Let's Talk events and hearing your suggestions on how we can improve services for your children.



**Our Time**  
All Ability Youth Forum

## "Every Star is Different"

For young people in East London aged 14-25

- Meet new people, have fun and get your voice heard
- Gain new experiences and skills
- Raise awareness about SEN and campaign for change

To find out more please call **020 7364 7127**

Or Email: [ourtime.yf@gmail.com](mailto:ourtime.yf@gmail.com)

# Let's Talk SEND sessions: information for families



Let's Talk SEND sessions have been developed in partnership with the Independent SEND Parent Forum (ISPF) and built upon successful models such as the ISPF Health Events and the Tower Hamlets Parent and Carer Council (PCC).

The launch event took place at the Brady Arts and Community Centre in November. SEND system leaders met with parents and carers of children on SEN Support or with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Parents heard from Steve Nyakatawa, Divisional Director of Education, about plans for improvement following the SEND Local Area Inspection.

Parents participated in a group discussion and shared their experiences of information and support, communication between local area leaders and access to services for children and families with SEND.

Parents spoke about the role of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in schools.

## You said...

- Clear feedback from the class teacher really helped so that as a parent I can support my child
- The SENCO in school was really good at giving information and support
- Would like other professionals involved in the annual review process, not only the SENCOs
- More information about the SENCO's role would make it better

Parents also shared their experiences of health services, social care, youth services and children and family centres.

## You said...

- More support for families waiting for diagnosis is needed

- More information needed about diagnosis – what is or will be possible for our children?
- Emotional support for parents to help them accept diagnoses and outline how their child's education can be supported. That would make it better – giving them an info pack is not enough
- Families need to know what support is on offer from the inclusion service
- Better transition support with information about what is available for young people
- How to access respite or what is suitable for different ages, especially teenagers
- It is unclear what is available in children and family centres, particularly speech and language support for young children
- More information is needed about youth provision for teens with additional needs

## Your experiences are important and will inform the improvement journey.

The next Let's Talk SEND session will take place on **Tuesday 1 March, 10.30am-12noon.**

The focus will be SEND in the Early Years.

Meet SEND system leaders, share your experiences of services and support and find out about services for families and the Local Offer.

**For further dates, see page 27.**



# TOWER PROJECT Youth Club



A Free Club in Tower Hamlets for young people  
with disabilities aged 11-25



Opening times:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday  
6:00pm-8:00pm term time only



Registration is simple. Call the number below to request an application form or you can send us an email.

All staff are professionally qualified and DBS checked.

**Please note:** this is not a short break offer and you will NOT lose your entitlement to your current short break if you join this club.

**Location:**

45-55 White Horse Road, LimeHouse  
London, E1 OND

**Contact us:**

0207 790 9085

Sam.johnstone@towerproject.org.uk

## Supporting young people with autism

Young people with autism can request a lanyard from SEND IASS that they can use in public to let people know they have autism. The lanyard and card was designed by Our Time All Ability Youth Forum to promote autism awareness and acceptance.

To get a lanyard call 020 7364 6489.



**I am Autistic please be patient with me.**

**"We are all different and have different abilities"**



## Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum

The Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum is pan-disability. The aim of the forum is to facilitate a range of consultation opportunities, share local and national information and ensure parents are informed of their rights, legislation and good practice.

The forum organises events and coffee mornings across the borough providing opportunities for parents to talk to other parents, share their experiences and find out about local services.

It represents the collective voice of parents in Tower Hamlets. Members regularly meet with SEND system leaders providing feedback from consultations and the lived experiences of families.



Make your voice count towards a better future for all your children and join the Independent SEND Parent Forum.

Email: [thsendforum@gmail.com](mailto:thsendforum@gmail.com)

Tel: **07498 573 872**

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

### Local Offer spotlight on autism-friendly cinema

The Stratford Picturehouse holds autism-friendly film screenings on the third Sunday of each month. To find more inclusive family friendly events and activities, click [here](#).