

Becoming more independent

Many parents said that their children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) should learn more skills to help them to be as independent as possible and more should be done to increase work experience and to help young people with SEND get into work.

The Council leads a Preparation for Adulthood Group and will ensure parents are able to attend this. It has also been working with Project Search to increase the number of supported internships for young people from Tower Hamlets.

Funding challenges

The funding provided by Government for children with SEND is under pressure. Over the past five years in Tower Hamlets we have had many more children with high needs and only a little more money. There is currently a big overspend in this area and the Council has difficult choices to make to balance the books.

The workshops will be the first of many times when the Council will be listening to families and young people with SEND. The Council has already started to act on the suggestions for how SEND services can become better, while working with less funding.

The Council is consulting formally about whether to cut back on some services and on the amount of money (top-up) that schools and colleges receive to organise the support set out in each EHCP. Details can be found here: https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/SEND_2019/.

A report on the responses to the consultation will be discussed by the Mayor and by councillors before anything is decided. The Council will keep parents and young people informed through the Local Offer.

Getting Involved

SEND Ambassadors

SEND Ambassadors are all parents or carers of children with SEND. Their role is to help to keep other parents and carers informed about services and to help parents to be able to participate and are consulted about changes and improvements for children with SEND.

They can be contacted at:
SENDparentambassadors@gmail.com.

Tower Hamlets SEND independent parents forum

Giving parents the opportunity to talk to other parents and make your voice count towards a better future for all your children. We believe you have a stronger voice when you act together be part of the solution.

To attend our events please get in touch
thsend2018@gmail.com / 07498573872



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.

Advice, Information and Support Services



To find out more please visit the Local Offer website www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk



The SEND Engagement Workshops

What you told us
and
what we are doing



July 2019

What happened at the workshops?

The Engagement Workshops were a new approach to consulting with parents in Tower Hamlets: discussions together around the one table, openly sharing the challenges and working together to identify possible solutions to concerns, both 'big picture' and day-to-day.

A detailed report has been prepared for SEND leaders in Tower Hamlets Council. The most important concerns and solutions from the workshops are in this leaflet, as well as some of the actions the Council has already taken.

The Workshops covered four themes:

- what an education, health and care plan (EHCP) should achieve
- the money with each EHCP
- updating SEND services and reducing duplication
- the help needed to becoming an independent adult.



Concerns

- Accountability and transparency: parents find there is too little accountability and transparency about SEND arrangements by the Council, by schools to the Council, or from both, to parents. They want to see parents being involved more.
- Money with an EHCP: hardly any parents knew about SEND funding, including the top-up amount for their child, or about direct payments. Better information about money would help parents to play their part to achieve the right support.

Solutions

- Systematic parental involvement: more parents and carers to be invited to attend groups and decision-making bodies for SEND in Tower Hamlets. The Council, NHS and school leaders should let their staff know regularly that they expect to see parents actively involved.
- Personal budgets: give parents information about the budget with their child's EHCP. Parents also want information about personal budgets in Tower Hamlets and clear advice about how to work with the school and other services.

What we are doing...

Systematic parental involvement: the Council will list where parents are represented at the moment and increase involvement.

Complaints: information on making complaints will be updated and sent out through schools / parents groups.

Work to clarify personal budget arrangements in Tower Hamlets has started and an update will be sent out by the end of the year.

The SEND Ambassadors will meet with other parents about what training should be made available.

Concerns

- Improve high needs processes: parents see too little monitoring of annual reviews and had experienced little involvement from social care or health practitioners. Too many EHCPs are difficult for parents to understand, have not been updated recently and only cover education.
- SEND information: there is too little information for parents and carers about the SEND system and processes in Tower Hamlets.

Solutions

- Monitoring annual reviews: the Council should devote more effort to coordinating and monitoring annual reviews.
- Better EHCPs: all EHCPs should be kept up-to-date, have a clear summary page, and the contents should cover health and social care as well as education.
- Information: publish clear, concise information that gives an overview of the SEND processes in Tower Hamlets, which has been designed for and with parents.

What we are doing...

Monitoring annual reviews: the Council is already looking at how it coordinates annual reviews. This will be completed and a progress report for parents sent out by the end of the year.

Better EHCPs: the SEN Team and the Parents Advice Centre (PAC) will trial the review and update of the EHCPs for all children in years 5 and 6 from autumn 2019.

Information: the Council will review current information about SEND processes with the SEND Ambassadors. Improved information will be produced by the end of the year.