

FamiliesMatter

Issue 37 April 2015

News, information and training to support your work with families



Raising Achievement and Realising Aspirations in Tower Hamlets

A record number of parents have attended the annual Tower Hamlets Council Parent Conference.

More than 160 local parents and carers attended the event, which was the ninth annual parent conference.

Held on Wednesday 11th March at the CCT Venues Plus building at Canary Wharf, it celebrated the crucial role parents and carers play in supporting children's learning and achievement, and sought to encourage even further improvements.



Inside

- 2-5** Parent Conference
- 6-7** Home Education
- 8-14** Parent Support & Health
- 15-17** SEND News
- 17-19** Community News
- 20** Professional Development & Training

Welcome to the summer edition of Families Matter

The theme of this edition is shared with our annual Parent Conference – raising aspirations. There are changes in education, qualifications and the job market that families need to navigate. Parents want their children to be successful, healthy individuals, living productive lives.

We know that aspirations are important for our families, and this was shared by local parents, children and young people in our new film: Looking to the Future, Raising Aspirations in Tower Hamlets.

There is also information on work being done to support and engage with parents and carers who educate their children at home, an update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms and wider work to support families in this area, plus exciting news of the Parental Engagement Team's new partnership with the Jamie Oliver Ministry of Food.

Jill McGinley
Head of Parent and Family Support Service

Parent Conference

The theme of the event was **'Families Matter – Raising Achievement and Realising Aspirations'**.

It featured speeches and workshops aimed at giving advice and guidance on how parents can help their children improve their learning and education.

Practical measures parents can take include attending dedicated courses to keep up with the latest learning techniques, and providing space and equipment for revising and working at home.



Those attending included parents, grandparents, foster carers and teenage parents.

Guest speakers included Robert McCulloch-Graham, the council's Corporate Director of Education, Social Care and Wellbeing, and Monica Forty, Head of Learning and Achievement, Birth to 11 years.

The keynote speaker was Claire Frost, Assistant Headteacher at Langdon Park School, where dedicated sessions have been held to help parents support their child's learning at home and also consider all of the options that are available for further education and training.



Parent Conference

Conference workshops gave parents an opportunity to explore ideas for healthy living to raise attainment and also to widen horizons of young people and their families to pursue university places and apprenticeships.

Parents and carers were also shown a new film, **'Looking to the Future: Raising Aspirations in Tower Hamlets'** which showed local children, young people, parents and schools discussing the importance of having aspirations and having a plan to reach life goals. To watch the film visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport

According to research, good parental engagement is an effective way of building strong home-school relationships; improving outcomes for children, raising attainment and building social capital within the wider school community.

"The video was very touching and inspiring, it made me proud and aware of how gifted children in Tower Hamlets are!"
Parent at conference



Members of the Tower Hamlets Parent and Carer Council spoke briefly about their experiences and encouraged other parents to join and contribute to the development of services for families in the borough.

A new partnership with Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food and the Parental Engagement Team was formally launched at the conference. In a specially recorded video message for the conference, Jamie Oliver told the audience: **"This is going to be fantastic, this is a brilliant course for the parents and I think you are going to love it."**

He added: **"This is about local people teaching local people how to cook, how to budget, how to cook nutritious, healthy, affordable food and it's all really parent-focused. So we are looking after the kids with the Kitchen Garden project and now we are looking after the parents."**



Find out how Jamie's Ministry of Food programme has developed in Tower Hamlets since the conference: page 12

The 2015 Annual Parent Conference was supported by



Lloyd's Community Programme: www.loyds.com/loyds/corporate-responsibility/community-programme

Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership: www.thebp.org

Discover Children's Story Centre: www.discover.org.uk

Half Moon Young People's Theatre: www.halfmoon.org.uk

Museum of London www.museumoflondon.org.uk

Rich Mix: www.richmix.org.uk

Home Education in Tower Hamlets

There are approximately 150 families registered with Pupil Services as home educators within Tower Hamlets. Many home educators belong to support and communication networks within in Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs.

Parents choose to home educate for a range of reasons and there are often triggers which lead parents to opt for home schooling. These may include:

- Family choice
- Lack of confidence in the state system
- Negative experiences within state and private education (their own and/or their child's)
- Experiences of bullying
- No suitable school place being available
- Children being excluded
- A child's additional/special educational needs not being met.

Families may choose to combine home-schooling with state education and not all children within one family will be home educated.

Tower Hamlets has two Home Education Advisors who are available to support parents who decide to educate at home. An annual meeting or home visit is arranged to discuss the education being provided and if necessary offer suggestions or recommendations

Guidance about home education is available from the Pupil Services Team

6

or the Home Education Policy and guidance notes on home education in Tower Hamlets for parents and carers can be downloaded from the Tower Hamlets website. The purpose of the policy and guidance is to:

- Set out clear information on the legal position for the local authority and parents/carers in relation to home education
- Describe Tower Hamlets' procedures for children who are home educated
- Describe Tower Hamlets' procedure for children with Special Educational Needs
- Share parents' ideas about resources/visits for home education.

For more information contact the Pupil Services Team on 020 7364 5006 or visit: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport (click on home schooling link).

Educators Information Event

The Parental Engagement Team held the first home educators information event in January 2015. Thirty-seven parents and carers attended with 49 children who are home educated. Parents shared their experiences of home educating and the networks/resources they used to support their child's learning.

Parents and carers were also given an information pack of activities and services available for Tower Hamlets families. Parents and carers were encouraged to join the Parent and Carer Council and Dads' Network to further support their family life.

Parent Comments:

"A great start to a home schooling resource. Great to meet people, hear their stories and get ideas. Would love to attend more and keep involved – please organise another"

"Thank you for organising this useful get together – more of this would be highly appreciated, since we could only talk with a few in the given time. So – MORE!"

The next event takes place during the autumn term. For more information
Email: parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk



Raising Aspirations – One Child's Journey to Adulthood

Local parent Abi Mitchell shares her family's experience of home educating their daughter Rebecca between the ages of 11-17. The family live on the Isle of Dogs and Rebecca is now studying at Tower Hamlets College.

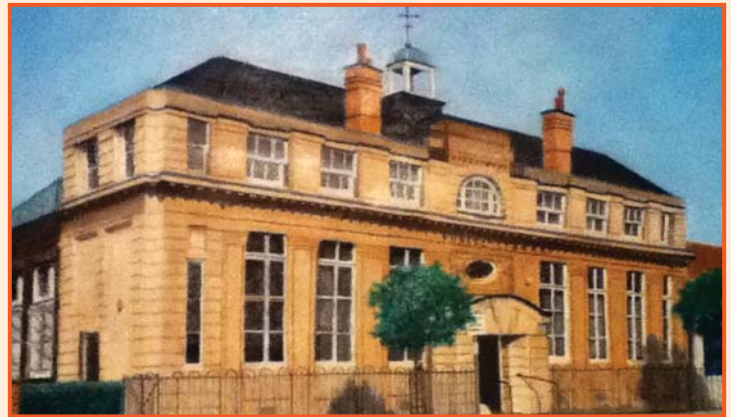
Rebecca was a shy, chubby girl when she left primary school. She re-entered the education system at 17. In the meantime, we educated her at home.

We started quite rigidly, with set times and curriculum lessons but quickly worked out a way of teaching Rebecca for 90 minutes a day. After all, the rule was we needed to teach to our child's ability; we didn't have to teach any particular subject, so within the year, Rebecca was learning all about the human body and how to row. Over the following years, Rebecca competed as a single sculler all over the country; she even competed at the Junior National Championships. And she won medals and trophies too.



We met with home education consultants every January who were very supportive of all that we did.

Rebecca became fit and strong. We also taught her English and maths and a few other topics of her choice. We used library books; we didn't use the internet as we couldn't afford it. We used lots of things within our reach, often limited only by our imagination. Although we taught Rebecca during 'formal' one to one lessons where she couldn't drift off or daydream, her learning didn't stop there. Opportunities for her to learn, and for



Rebecca's portrait of Cubitt Town Library

us to teach, existed at every turn – television themes, news topics, magazine articles, and general knowledge all provoked interesting discussions.

Although a superb athlete by age 16, Rebecca also carried on doing what was closest to her heart – drawing and painting. She painted in oil the Cubitt Town Library and it now hangs in the building on long term loan. She is also artist in residence at Mudchute Farm. A gifted artist, Rebecca is now studying at Tower Hamlets College – for her GCSEs and a BTEC Level 3 in Art and Design. She is less socially anxious and is excited about her future.

We have another daughter aged 11 (Rachel) who has no social difficulties and she is happy in mainstream school, now in her first year at Bishop Challoner. This demonstrates how, within one family, as children are individuals, with individual needs, you can home school one and not the other.

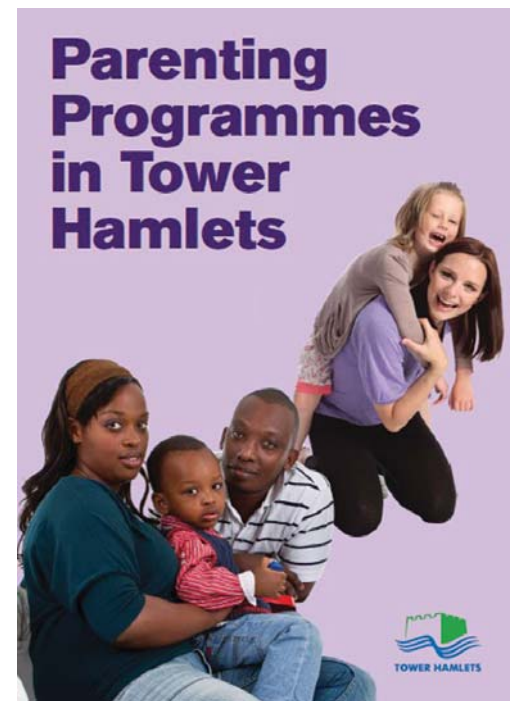
Rebecca's home education journey with its free and limitless approach helped her become the contented, self-confident and unique individual she is today.

The way we did it is certainly not a model for everyone, but it is one way to do it and we are very proud of what we achieved, together.

Parenting Programmes in Tower Hamlets

Parenting programmes in Tower Hamlets are delivered in partnership. Staff from the local authority, health, schools and the voluntary sector work together to ensure parents and carers receive the support and information they need.

The following programmes are planned for the summer term.



Parenting Programme	Age Range	Additional Information	Delivery Day	Venue
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in English. Crèche available	Monday	Phoenix School
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in Bengali	Monday	Osmani Centre
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in English	Tuesday	Isis Building, Marsh Wall, Isle of Dogs
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in Somali	Tuesday	Malmesbury Primary School
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in Bengali	Tuesday	St Paul's Way Trust School
Emotional First Aid	Birth - 18		TBC	TBC
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in Bengali	Tuesday	Parents Advice Centre
Triple P – Teen	11 - 18	Programme delivered in English	Wednesday	Langdon Park School
Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	Birth - 18	Programme delivered in Bengali	Friday	Mile End Children's Centre
Triple P Discussion Group	Birth - 12	One-off session introducing positive parenting techniques and ways to promote children's development	Saturday	LBTH Professional Development Centre
Understanding your Child's On-line World	Birth - 18	E-safety for Families	Saturday	LBTH Professional Development Centre

For further information on or to refer a family on to parenting programme, please contact the Parental Engagement Team at:
parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call **020 7364 6398**

Parental Engagement Programmes Triumph Around the Borough – One Dad’s Story...

Frank Herholdt attended a Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC) course aimed at fathers at Columbia Primary School in Bethnal Green.

Frank is a photographer and has travelled the world. He says that he wasn’t really prepared to have children with his present wife and believes that he probably shouted at his children more than was necessary before he took part in the dads’ programme.

The course was a real eye-opener for me.

I started a family late in life. I had my first child when I was 60. It was a shock to the system. My children are now five and eight. I grew up in the 1950s when corporal punishment was normal. My dad used to just give me a slap and lose his temper with me. Parenting has changed.

One of the things that never left me from the course is that you are always giving your kids orders.

You spend your whole time saying don’t do this, pick that up, look to your left – if you’re walking down the street, for instance, you’re giving them orders all the time. Even though you’re trying to protect them or look after them, you’re actually giving them orders.

You never get round to having a conversation with them. This really stuck with me and I started to suddenly stop and go, okay let’s talk about whatever it is, as long as we were having a



conversation and not a situation where I was telling them what to do.

Another thing I learned was about taking the boys out on their own individually and letting them do what they would like to do. Like go down to see HMS Belfast or something like that. It would be their choice.

I found that I enjoyed being a parent much more by learning just a few simple things. Every parent struggles. You

constantly think you can handle situations better.

It was interesting to see that everybody has their challenges and you can see how bad parenting impacts on children. I think this particular course is a good thing and more parents should do it. It was really worthwhile.

With thanks to Jacqueline Harthill and Kois Miah

The council’s Parent and Family Support Service has worked with hundreds of families through a variety of parenting programmes and courses.

More than 600 parents have graduated from parenting programmes, which include Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, Triple P, Mellow Parenting, Speakeasy, Emotional First Aid (EFA) and other programmes designed to meet individual parent and family needs.

Programmes are delivered in many formats to reflect the changing needs of families and include one-off workshops and

longer courses of eight or 13 weeks.

Jill McGinley, Head of Parent and Family Support, said: **“Parenting programmes provide a valuable opportunity for parents to come together to share their parenting experiences and to learn skills to help them deal with challenging behaviour as well as acknowledge and celebrate how hard being a parent can be sometimes.**

Week by week, parents grow in confidence and develop a greater understanding of their child’s needs and development.”



Mellow Parenting Course Success

Toyhouse has just finished another 14-week Mellow Parenting course. The course increases parents' and carers' understanding of parenting styles, with new strategies to use with their children. Attendance by participants was high, especially during the second half of the course, when parents felt more strongly engaged with the group. This is despite some sessions being emotional and personally challenging.

Mellow uses an interactive group work style with a strong emphasis on peer support by other participants. A bond builds which continues outside group sessions and after the course ends. Mellow is a relationship-based intervention which promotes positive parent-child interaction. Mellow is for parents and their pre-school children together, and thus interaction

and behaviour patterns can be more positively developed, both by the tutors and the parent group, as we all learn together. A short film is made of parent and child interaction at home, usually during a time which is often stressful, such as mealtimes or bathing. Parents can keep the DVD and parents share snippets with the group so, in a supportive atmosphere, parents suggest strategies to try.

Mellow is particularly aimed at more vulnerable parents and those not engaged with mainstream services.

There are four parts to Mellow days:

- Mornings: parents reflect on their own childhood, whilst children are involved in the Children's Group.
- Middle: parents, children, staff and volunteers all come together to prepare and share a light meal and then jointly engage in a range of practical activities.
- Afternoons: parents reflect on their own parenting, identifying strategies more likely to be successful with their children.

Supporting Young Families at St Mary and St Michael

'Stay and Play' and toy library sessions have been successfully taking place at St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School. Working in partnership, Idea Store Watney Market staff attend the session twice a term providing 'Story and Rhyme Time' sessions for families.

Toy library has been very popular. The school is a member of the Toy House Libraries Association of Tower Hamlets. Almost all the toys for the session are new or nearly new and there is a wide variety to choose from.

The toy library is supported by the school's active parent volunteers.

Contact:

Charmaine Manning
Parent Support Partner
St Mary and St Michael
Catholic Primary School

- 'Have a go!' sheets outline a task for parents to tackle during the week then report back to the supportive, encouraging and empowering group!

Contact:

Pip Pinhorn
Toyhouse Manager
Toyhouse Libraries Association
of Tower Hamlets
www.toyhouse.org.uk

Healthy Family Parent Ambassador Celebration!

Parent Support & Health



A celebration of the borough's latest Healthy Family Parent Ambassadors (HFPA) took place at the Professional Development Centre in March 2015.

Joint presentations were given by school staff and HFPA. HFPA talked about the workshops and activities they had facilitated for parents. School staff talked about the impact of the sessions on families.

Certificates were presented to schools for becoming Healthy Family Schools by the Associate Director of Public Health, Esther Trenchard-Mabere who said:

"Parents and carers play the most significant role in influencing the lifestyles of their children; the Parent Ambassadors play an important role by delivering parent-led sessions for families about health messages in fun, informal ways"

The Healthy Families Programme DVD was also launched to an appreciative audience.

To view the film, **Healthy Families Build Healthy Communities**, visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentfamilysupport

Closing remarks were made by Monica Forty, Head of Learning and Achievement, Birth to 11, who thanked the HFPA for all their outstanding work supporting families to make small changes that have a lifelong impact.

During lunch, parents had an opportunity to have health checks by Health Trainers from the Osmani Centre who carried out BMI and blood pressure monitoring. The Family Information Service gave out health information and Change for Life goodies. Parents were also able to 'cycle for a smoothie' as they made delicious refreshments with help from Urban Smoothie Bikes.



Healthy Family Parent Ambassador Training

In November 2014 parents from six schools completed the Healthy Family Parent Ambassador (HFPA) training. The Ambassador training empowers parents to support other parents tackle health related issues.

High levels of childhood obesity in Tower Hamlets, below national average consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables and low levels of physical activity are impacting on the future life chances of children and young people.

The Ambassador training works at a local level by offering parents a community-based training development programme. During fun, interactive sessions they learn about the Eat Well Plate, balanced meals, food facts about sugar, salt and fat, how to encourage more physical activity and lots more.

Once training is complete HFPA are supported to:

- run healthy eating and physical activity workshops/sessions
- signpost families to visit and use leisure facilities, including parks and other open spaces
- promote school/setting health initiatives.

All HFPA are invited to a termly network meeting to receive current health messages and share their skills and experiences.

"The HFPA training made me realise that we all need to be a bit more health conscious. I have made changes in my family and as a HFPA in school I have raised awareness about hidden sugars"

Natalie, HFPA

Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools

Becoming a HFPA has led many parents into voluntary work and paid employment.

For more information on the HFPA programme, contact The Parental Engagement Team on **020 7364 6398**



Grab your Aprons! Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food Reaches Tower Hamlets

A new partnership with Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food and the Parental Engagement Team was formally launched at the annual Parent Conference on Wednesday the 11th March.

The programme, which builds upon the pupil-focused Kitchen Garden Project at St Paul's Whitechapel Primary School, aims to train parents on how to cook nutritious, healthy and affordable food. Parents will share their new skills and knowledge with other parents by delivering cooking programmes in schools and other community venues.

As part of the programme, Sarah McSweeney and Hilary Cheyne, Parent Support Practitioners in the Parental Engagement Team and a group of parents, recently took part in the exciting opportunity to be trained by Jamie Oliver's team.

The partnership is part of a drive to improve residents' cooking skills and boost healthy eating in Tower Hamlets.

12

Sarah shares their experience...

Here we find ourselves, two Parent Support Practitioners and five parents, knives and onions in hand, taking part in an incredible opportunity to learn how to cook, 'Jamie Style', the aim being to spread the word (and skills) to Tower Hamlets families that taking healthy eating into our own hands and doing it on a budget is as easy as, well, poaching an egg!

It was three days of training packed with quick and easy 'cook from scratch' recipes, practical skills and information about small changes that make a big difference to ours and our families' health and wellbeing.

We arrive feeling slightly apprehensive. Asking each other 'Do you know how to cook?' 'Do you do the cooking at home?' 'Have you ever made a bolognese, a curry, a soup from scratch?' slowly we realise that we all have a range different experiences and it

doesn't matter – we are all in the same boat (or kitchen). We are here to learn the tasty basics which will be versatile, quick and easy fall-back recipes to use at home with our families and friends when we have no idea of what or how to cook, or are simply bored of the same old meals we make... and here's the great news, it's fun!

From professional knife skills to information about healthy food choices, we start to feel that there is a lot to learn in the kitchen – and that we can do it!

Our families and friends are now willing guinea pigs and putting on an apron and practising our new-found recipes is more regular and enjoyable.

And if you're wondering, no, we didn't get to meet the man himself, but we certainly came away feeling armed with new cookery skills and ideas and inspired by his positive message that everyone can cook healthy food on a budget... you just have to give it a try.

For more information please contact: husna.begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7364 1952

A total of 14 parents will be trained as part of the partnership with Jamie's Ministry of Food. In the coming months they will share their newly found skills and knowledge with other local parents by delivering cooking programmes in Tower Hamlets schools and other community venues.

The pilot programme is being delivered as part of the successful Healthy Families programme delivered by the Parental Engagement Team.

Parents' Comments:

"It was one of the best experiences of my cooking life. It's amazing to cook your own meals and it's cheap as chips as well.



"I'm practising at home to build my confidence and so when I deliver the training I can do it properly. We're doing what we can to help other parents."

Khaled Hussain, Parent from St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary School

"I'm very happy that I did it. The skills have stayed with me and I'm already trying to spread the word. I can see just by talking to people that when they are talking about going and buying a pizza I say no, 'you can do this and that and make it more cheaply and more healthily'. I'm hoping people will really take this on board."



Marie McMahon, Parent from St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School

Chisenhale Cooking Club Success



Children from the cooking and gardening clubs at Chisenhale Primary School were thrilled to discover that they had won first prize in a national competition entitled 'Grow your Own Lunch', organised by School Food Matters. They were invited to the Edible Garden Show at Alexandra Palace in March to collect their prize of £2,000 of vouchers from Morrisons to buy cooking and gardening equipment for the school.

The winning recipe, vegetable sabji with chapatii and cape gooseberry lassi, was devised with the help of parent volunteers Jyoti Vijan, chef Ali Noor (who runs the cooking club) and Cassie Liversidge (gardening), using ingredients that the school had either grown or were planning to grow in the school garden. The healthy recipe uses lots of fresh vegetables and was obviously a hit with the judges, as it was with the children when they made it in cooking club.

The pupils had a great day out when they went to collect their prize and were able to find out lots more about healthy eating and growing.

Headteacher Helen James says: "We are proud of our fantastic garden at Chisenhale and are so lucky to have such talented parent volunteers who are able to share their expertise with the children through clubs at the school. These hands-on experiences provide memorable ways to develop children's learning."

Contact:

Ruth Crossan

Parent Engagement and Extended Schools Manager
Chisenhale Primary School

Fitness Fun at St Mary and St Michael

St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School's church hall has been a hive of activity as the school strengthens its community partnerships. On Thursday mornings, parents from the local community have been taking part in vigorous exercise classes that are proving popular.



The Stifford Centre provided Zumba classes in partnership with the school. The classes have been a great success with 30 women attending. The response has been very positive. One parent said:

"This is a great way to get the community together. I prefer this class to attending the gym. Wellbeing is so important and we are having fun at the same time. It is great!"

**Contact: Charmaine Manning, Parent Support Partner
St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School**

Talking Therapies for Parents

Compass Wellbeing are a social enterprise that provides talking therapies to people who are registered at GPs in Tower Hamlets.



Workshops are delivered in schools and other settings to create awareness of the talking therapies that are available to local residents and can be tailored to particular groups by focussing on specific themes such as stress, anxiety or depression. Workshops also cover how symptoms can be recognised and what services that can be accessed.

Compass understand that there are barriers when it comes to discussing or finding the right services for support. Many parents do not know that services can be accessed via their GPs, as there are clinicians in each practice in Tower Hamlets.

The workshops are delivered by clinicians who are fully trained and services are free.

Contact:
Jusna Uddin
Project Assistant, Compass Wellbeing
Tel: 020 7791 9327
jusna.uddin@nhs.net

Sun Safety

With summer on its way, it's important to be safe when spending time outdoors, but it can also get very hot indoors. Parents and carers of small children should be mindful of keeping them away from open windows, especially if they live in multi-storey flats, as babies and children can climb out.

Here are some tips for staying cool:

- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm
- Wear UV sunglasses, preferably wraparound, to reduce UV exposure to the eyes, walk in the shade, apply sunscreen of at least SPF15 with UVA protection, wear a hat and light scarf. Wear light, loose-fitting cotton clothes. This should minimise the risk of sunburn
- Drink lots of cool drinks
- Look out for others, especially vulnerable groups such as older people, young children and babies and those with serious illnesses
- Never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals.

If you are fasting for Ramadan:

- If you start to feel unwell, disoriented or confused, or collapse or faint, advice is to stop fasting and have a drink of water or other fluid. This is especially important for older adults, those with poorly controlled medical conditions such as low/high blood pressure, diabetes and those who are receiving dialysis treatment.

For more information visit NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/summerhealth/pages/summerhealthhome.aspx>

Supporting Families: SEND Special Educational Needs and Disability Reforms

Changes for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) took place nationally and in Tower Hamlets from September 2014.

1

Local Offer

As part of the SEND reforms, each local authority has a

requirement to publish a 'Local Offer' of services available for families of children and young people aged 0-25. Tower Hamlets is working on the content and accessibility of this offer.

The Tower Hamlets Local Offer will help parents, carers and young people to see what support and help is available, how to access it and enable them to comment on it.

2

Improving outcomes and setting high expectations for children and young people with SEN

We want to see all children and young people make progress so they:

- Achieve their best
- Become confident individuals living fulfilling lives
- Make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education or training

The Graduated Response – this replaces school action and school action plus. It consists of a cycle of action – Assess Plan Do and Review. After assessment if a school decides to provide a pupil with support they must formally notify parents. Schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards these outcomes.

Schools SEN Information Report – the new law requires all schools to publish an SEN information report on their websites. The report must cover information such as: the school's approach to SEN how they identify and assess needs and monitor progress; how they consult with and involve parents and children with SEN; and the expertise and training of their staff. Parents should start to see these reports become available from autumn 2014 onwards.

Dispute resolution – the aim is to resolve disagreements between parents or young people and their education provider, local authority or health commissioner at an early stage. Dispute resolution and mediation services will be available on the Local Offer from the autumn.

3

Education Health and Care Plans

From September 2014 a new assessment and planning process will bring together information from education health and social care into a coordinated Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan for those children or young people with the most complex SEND.

The new approach will focus on outcomes and the aspirations of children and their families. This way of working puts children and their families at the very centre of the assessment and planning process. It has been welcomed by families who have helped trial this way of working.

EHC Plans replace SEN statements. They will also replace Learning Disability Assessments (LDAs) for young people who stay in education or training beyond 16 years of age. Young people aged 16 or over will now have the right to request an EHC assessment in their own right.

4

Personal Budgets

From September 2014 anyone with an EHC Plan who is eligible, will have the choice to request a personal budget. The introduction of personal budgets is to encourage all services to be flexible in using resources to meet the outcomes set out in the EHC Plan.

For those eligible for a personal budget, guidance will be given on how they will work and what they can be used for. The range of services available through a direct payment in the first instance are for social care services such as personal care and short breaks and continuing health care.

Please visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/localoffer or contact the Family Information Service for further information and details on how you can include your service in the Tower Hamlets Local Offer.

Family Information Service
Tel: 020 7364 6495 Email: fis@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Independent Parental Supporter Graduation

A new team of community volunteers who run 12-week IPS (Independent Parental Supporter) training programme celebrated their achievement in a graduation ceremony at the Parents Advice Centre in February.



IPS volunteers provide free, impartial, confidential advice and practical support to families of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Training covered legal aspects of special educational needs as well as how to facilitate the partnership between parents and schools to ensure the best outcomes for their children.

As well as completing the IPS course, volunteers undertook additional training (online modules, an online test and two days of external face-to-face training) to ensure that they are qualified to provide Independent Support (IS) in line with the still fairly recent legislation from the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Department for Education, in a recent evaluation, highlighted the IS work in Tower Hamlets as a beacon of good practice.

Contact:
Netty Yasin, Volunteer Coordinator, Parents Advice Centre
netty.yasin@towerhamlets.gov.uk

PARENTS ADVICE CENTRE (PAC)

Tower Hamlets Parent Partnership Service for parents of children with special needs

For more information contact:

Parents Advice Centre
30 Greatorex Street
Whitechapel
London E1 5NP

020 7364 6489

or email:
pac@towerhamlets.gov.uk

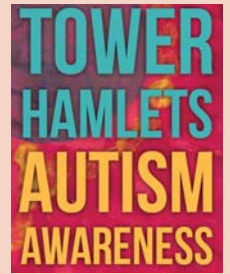


SEN SUPPORT GROUP

- We meet every Friday morning 10am-12noon in the Parents' Room at PAC
- Come and meet other parents, share information and ideas over tea and biscuits – and have some fun!
- Bengali and Somali speakers available – other languages on request
- Advisor on hand if you require any advice
- Younger children welcome – we have toys and books for under 5s
- Meet members of the local Parent/Carers Forum (PACSEN) who are working to improve services for children and young people

Autism and Hidden Ability

Each person living with autism is unique. There are many individuals on the autism spectrum who have been recognised for their accomplishments and abilities. Some of the great things about individuals with an autism spectrum disorder can include:



- Excellent memory
- Honesty
- Great at learning visually (by seeing things)
- Good at thinking logically
- Good at focussing and working really hard at one thing at a time
- Noticing things that other people might not notice
- Having different and interesting ideas
- Might have special talents or knowledge (being very good at something or knowing lots about something)

*with thanks to Phoenix Primary and Secondary School

If you would like more information or have ideas about how to raise awareness about autism in Tower Hamlets, please email the **Tower Hamlets Autism Awareness Group:**
autismawareness@phoenix.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Tower Hamlets Peer Research Project



A new peer research project has just been launched to help young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Tower Hamlets get their voices heard. One of the researchers, Abadur Rahman, 20, who is studying business at University, explained:

“It gives vulnerable people a chance to share their thoughts, and maybe their life could be made easier.”

The aim of the project is to find out how young people feel about adulthood, what they want, and how they think services could help them. **“It gives people a chance to voice their opinions,”** added researcher Afsana Begum, 22.

Twelve young people have now attended the peer research training course that began last autumn. During the course the researchers developed a questionnaire which they are now using to interview other young people.



In April the peer researchers are planning to launch the next phase of their project to help raise awareness of the views, thoughts and feelings of young people in Tower Hamlets.

The project is being supported by Tower Hamlets Council's new Young People's Information, Advice and Support Service. The service has been set up to inform, advise and support young people with additional needs around education, health and social care.

To find out more please contact:
charlotte.latimer@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7364 4982

Passport to Learning Information Day to Support Parents and Carers into Employment



Parent and Family Support Service
Parental Engagement Team

Passport to Learning Programme

“Completing the P2L course set me on the path to employment; it gave me the opportunity to volunteer in school. I've gained valuable experience and skills and now am a full time Nursery Assistant.”

The Passport to Learning Programme delivers courses to help parents/carers identify and evaluate their skills, achievements and experiences in order to move towards further learning, training, volunteering and employment.

Parents signed up to Building Skills and Confidence and the Next Steps – Support into Employment courses which are starting in April.

The Parental Engagement Team were on hand to talk to parents about their routes of progression into work and help them choose the right course.

A Money Mentor from the Limehouse Project was also available to talk to parents about finances and signpost to local financial support.

For more information, contact
Husna Begum on 020 7364 1952 or email:
husna.begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk

“Let’s Talk…” Feedback from the Latest PCC Meeting (March 2015)



Held at the Professional Development Centre in Bethnal Green, Parent and Carer Council members gave their views on how we can keep children and young people safe as they get older. This was part of the “Let’s Talk…” series which outlines the consultation theme of each PCC meeting.

There was an exercise exploring what **support parents need when their children are very young right up until they are young adults**. As reported at a previous PCC meeting, parents generally agreed that there seemed to be lots of support for parents with children aged under five and they were keen to see this level of parenting support continue as their children get older, with some parents saying they have seen increased parental engagement though their teenagers’ secondary school but more could be done.

Monawara Bakht, from Children’s Social Care, also shared the **Neglect Strategy** with PCC parents, discussing how to identify neglect, support the safeguarding of children in the community and the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (the LSCB). The LSCB has a PCC member in one of the lay member roles, Neherun Nessa Ali who said she was happy to share information between the two groups.

For further information on how parents and carers can join the PCC and participate in future meetings, please visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/parentcouncil email parentcouncil@towerhamlets.gov.uk or call the **Family Information Service** on 020 7364 6495

Parents also gave their feedback on their experience of the pupil

admissions process, which will feed into a wider consultation being conducted by Pupil Services to evaluate user satisfaction from both the school administration and parent user side. This continues the growing relationship between the PCC and Pupil Services to work on further improving the service and sharing information with parents.

There was so much to discuss that many PCC members have asked us to revisit topics, particularly those around safeguarding at a later date.

The next meeting is in June 2015.

“Each and every element of the meeting was useful, particularly learning about safeguarding, only thing is that the time is too short!”
PCC Parent

Tower Hamlets Foodbank

Tower Hamlets Foodbank will be continuing its **Summer Support Scheme** throughout the summer holidays this year.



Free school meals are a great help to many families and having to provide extra meals through the holidays can place real strain on household budgets. Nominated families will receive a weekly food allocation to provide healthy and balanced meals for the children whilst at home. There will also be a free programme of activities for children, as well as access to specialist advice and support for parents.

If you are interested in nominating families for the scheme, please contact Jo on: johanna@towerhamletsfoodbank.org.uk

Information on the Tower Hamlets Local Safeguarding Children Board and the newly published **Neglect Strategy 2014-17** can be found at the following weblink: www.childrenandfamiliestrust.co.uk/the-lscb/links-and-resources

Play Factory Holiday Childcare – Targeted Provision

During Easter the Play Factory launched a new targeted provision for children aged 8-13. This proved incredibly popular and places were in demand once again. Limited funded places will be available to support vulnerable children and young people within this age range. Examples of targeted children could be those new to the borough, young carers, isolated children, children who have experienced bullying, and girls aged 10-13 years. Children and young people will access quality childcare within a universal setting.

Places will be allocated on a first come first serve basis to children and young people referred by schools or a professional or agency working with/supporting a child, young person and/or family (self-referral from a parent or family will not be accepted).

For more information and to obtain a referral form please contact:

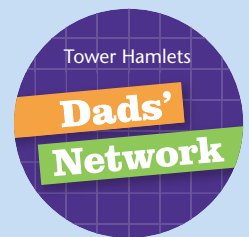
Jenny Quiller, Extended Day Adviser
Email: jenny.quiller@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7364 0523

The Platform for Change comic strip, created by a young person who was supported by the Family Intervention Project, should return in the next edition. Watch this space!

Dads' Play Day Event – Chrisp Street Idea Store



On Saturday 14th February the Tower Hamlets Dads' Network hosted a special Valentine-themed Dads' Play Day event in partnership with Chrisp Street Idea Store. The children's library at Chrisp Street Idea Store was taken over by men and their children as staff from the Parental Engagement Team and the Idea Store laid on a morning of free activities.



Children made Valentine's cards for family members and heart-shaped mobiles to take home.

Fathers and male carers of children who are resident or educated in the borough can sign up to become members of the Tower Hamlets Dads' Network

The next Dads' Play Day event takes place on Saturday 21st June 2015 (Fathers' Day weekend) at Bow Idea Store.

For more information email parenting@towerhamlets.gov.uk or phone 020 7364 6495.

Training & Events: Supporting Your Work with Families

Phoenix Outreach Service Parent Workshops

Workshop	Date	Time	Venue
Puberty and Changes	Tuesday 9 June 2015	10am- 12pm	St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary School, Wellclose Square, E1 8HY
Self-care skills (dressing, tooth-brushing, eating, haircutting)	Tuesday 30 June 2015	10am- 12pm	Wellington Primary School, Wellington Way, Bow, London, E3 4NE

If you know of parents who would like to attend, please email training@phoenix.towerhamlets.sch.uk with the parent's name, their child's name and school, and quoting 'parent training workshop'. A relative, friend or member of school staff are very welcome to accompany parents.

If you require any further information please contact Phoenix Outreach Service, at Phoenix School on **020 8980 4740**, extension 305 or 306.

Parent and Family Support Service

Monday 18 May 2015 1pm-4pm	Working with Families Seminar – Keeping Children and Young People Safe A multi-agency forum to improve the exchange of information and increase links between organisations and practitioners working with parents and families in Tower Hamlets
Tuesday 2 June 2015 9.30am-11am or 4.30pm-6pm	Moving Up 2016 Training and support for staff working with parents of children transferring to secondary school in September 2016
Tuesday 7 July 2015 1.15pm-3pm	Parental Engagement Tracker (PET) Briefing This session explores how schools can monitor and evaluate their work with parents and families using the PET, a secure information system developed to track and monitor parental involvement
Thursday 17 September Early Evening TBC	Effective Consultation with Parents and Dealing with Complaints This briefing explores strategies for obtaining the views of all parents and carers and ensuring information gained from consultation is used effectively when preparing for an Ofsted inspection. Session includes an update on Ofsted Parent View and explores how leadership teams and governors can manage complaints

For more information, charges or to book a place, contact:

Husna Begum **Telephone:** 020 7364 1952 **Email:** husna.begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk

No course charge applies to schools / settings that have a Service Level Agreement with the Parent and Family Support Service for 2015-2016.

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.

The newsletter is produced by the Parental Engagement Team within the Parent and Family Support Service, Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate.

To share news in future editions of Families Matter contact:

Fiona Stokes Telephone: 020 7364 6049 Email: fiona.stokes@towerhamlets.gov.uk