

# Tower Hamlets Partnership **Community Plan** **2015**



# Foreword



In this new Community Plan, the Tower Hamlets Partnership articulates its vision for the borough, and how we will work together with residents to realise it. I believe it is important for us to put the concerns of local people first, and maintain and improve the services we secure for them, from schools and housing to street-cleaning.

Though much of the development work for this Community Plan took place before my election in June 2015, I am committed to working with the partnership and pursuing shared objectives. Rather than begin the Plan again from scratch after so much has gone into its production, as a partnership we have agreed that it should remain largely unchanged for the time being, though as we move forward, it is likely that there will be some changes in emphasis and in some priorities.

For example, while we have increased the numbers of homes meeting the technical definition of “affordable”, in reality many of these remain out of reach for those on low or even moderate incomes, and we must tackle this serious challenge to our existing communities. We will also need to give greater emphasis to helping people overcome low skills, low incomes and high unemployment. And in our role leading the community, we must further enhance understanding and cohesion between generations and between communities, and maximise our consultation, engagement and outreach with residents and stakeholders.

This Community Plan, then, is not set in stone. It will evolve as we develop our plans to achieve our vision for the borough, and as we review other key partnership strategies like the Community Safety Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the Children and Families Plan, amongst others.

Together as partners, we will serve everyone in our community, and ensure that their interests are served to achieve the vision of a Tower Hamlets of which we can all be proud.

**John Biggs**  
**Mayor of Tower Hamlets**  
**Chair of Tower Hamlets Partnership**

# Introduction



## About Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is a fast paced, fast growing and changing borough. Its economy is thriving, more and more people want to live here, and large-scale and ambitious regeneration and infrastructure projects continue to bring fresh opportunities. The population is diverse, but there are many active communities who get on well together, with a thriving community and voluntary sector. Community facilities such as Idea Stores and leisure facilities are well-loved and well-used. The borough has seen unprecedented educational success, opening up more opportunities to the young people coming through our schools, and employment rates are rising.

Despite all this change and success, Tower Hamlets still has challenges to face. Too many residents have significant health problems. High housing costs and low incomes mean that homes

are unaffordable for many. Too many residents are not in work and struggle to make ends meet, especially as reforms erode the welfare state and costs of living rise. One of the biggest challenges the borough faces is ensuring that the benefits of growth and prosperity reach all parts of our community, with a fairer distribution of wealth and income across Tower Hamlets.

Along with this, the economic climate remains extremely challenging, despite some recent positive signs. Reduction of the national deficit will continue under the current government, and this will involve further deep public spending cuts. At the same time, as this plan sets out, the demand on services is increasing. A growing and ageing population means that, for example, Tower Hamlets Council will need to save £63m over the three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19. All partners need to think carefully about the most effective way of using their resources, enabling residents to support themselves and each other, and reducing their need for traditional services.

## The 2015 Community Plan

In developing a Community Plan for 2015 onwards, partners have emphasised the need for something which builds on and complements our existing partnership work, rather than replacing it. For this reason the existing Community Plan themes that partners have organised themselves around for some years now have been retained. They set out our ambition to make the borough:

- ➔ A great place to live
- ➔ A fair and prosperous community
- ➔ A safe and cohesive community
- ➔ A healthy and supportive community.

A key change is from 'a prosperous community' to 'a fair and prosperous community'. All partners wanted to reflect the contribution of the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission to the debate about economic growth and fair outcomes for local people, and use the new Community Plan to drive forward the recommendations of the Commission. Our consultation with residents emphasised that the community wants to see everyone benefiting from economic growth and prosperity, with a fair distribution of resources and opportunities across the community, not growth at any cost.

This plan sets out recent achievements, current challenges and commitments, in relation to the four Community Plan themes. Partnership working to pursue these priorities is well embedded and overseen by a range of partnership bodies. To build on and complement this work, this plan sets out proposed cross-cutting partnership priorities for the four years from 2015. Using this plan, partners will work together to harness the efforts of all partners and accelerate progress in these four important areas.



# A great place to live

*Tower Hamlets will be a place where people live in quality affordable housing, located in clean and safe neighbourhoods served by well-connected and easy to access services and community facilities*

## Achievements so far

### More homes, better homes

- ➔ The council and its housing provider partners secured 8000 homes with rents meeting the Government's criteria for affordability between 2004 and 2013.
- ➔ Tower Hamlets is consistently one of the top performing London boroughs for delivery of affordable homes, and many of these are family-sized, meaning that we have been able to rehouse 4800 overcrowded families over the last four years.
- ➔ As of April 2015, 78% of our social rented housing had achieved the Decent Homes standard.
- ➔ Tower Hamlets has recently received an award for having the highest number of sustainable homes of any local area.

### Thriving community spaces

- ➔ Tower Hamlets has over 232 hectares of open space and residents who use local parks and open spaces are consistently satisfied with them. In 2013 eight local parks received the Government's Green Flag Award, and in both 2012 and 2014 Victoria Park won the Green Flag 'People's Choice' Award, and can deservedly be called the nation's favourite park.
- ➔ The borough's Idea Stores and libraries have over two million visits a year, and Idea Store Whitechapel is the busiest in central London. These deliver over 900 courses and make a million loans annually, winning awards for their website, English language and adult learning provision. In 2013 a brand new Idea Store opened at Watney Market with 320,000 visitors in its first 10 months.
- ➔ Ahead of the Olympics, the borough delivered award-winning public realm improvements in Hackney Wick and Fish Island, on the fringe of the Olympic Park. We have also substantially renewed the Ocean Estate.
- ➔ We are continuing with development in our Local Plan and Core Strategy, with regeneration plans underway at Blackwall Reach, in Bromley-by-Bow and in Poplar. Our Whitechapel masterplan will harness the economic benefits of Crossrail, and deliver new homes and community facilities by 2025. We will also develop plans for the transformation of South Quay.



## The challenges we face

### A fast growing population

Tower Hamlets has experienced the fastest growing population in the country in recent years, growing almost 30% between the 2001 and 2011 Census. This growth has continued, with the population rising from 254,000 in 2011 to 272,000 in 2013, and projected to rise to 320,000 by 2022 and to over 350,000 by 2033.

Tower Hamlets is the third most densely populated borough in London, and the daytime population increases by about 60%, rising to 428,000. Around 107,000 commuters head to work in Canary Wharf each day, and major tourist attractions like the Tower of London draw in over 4 million visitors each year.

This scale of growth will impact across all organisations and services, and responding to it is therefore one of the cross-cutting priorities which we will be addressing together over the life of this Community Plan. We need to heed residents' concerns about the impact on existing communities of the large numbers of high value high-rise homes being built, including on facilities, quality of life, and on the cohesiveness which has long been a strength of the borough. These views will be considered in the development of our new Local Plan.

### Housing pressures

London as a whole has seen unprecedented increases in house prices and rents, driven by significant overseas investment. As highlighted by the Fairness Commission, market rates now bear little relation to the income of most residents. The very high price of property in Tower Hamlets, combined with rising rents, welfare reform, reductions in public funding and restrictions in borrowing for affordable homes, make ensuring sufficient affordable homes for residents one of the biggest challenges we face. Homes that meet the Government's definition of 'affordable' can still be out of reach to many local people,

- ➔ Implementation of the new Community Infrastructure Levy, a non-negotiable levy charged on most new development, will mean that developers who benefit from building housing in the borough will also contribute to developing and extending the necessary infrastructure to support population growth.
- ➔ We are keeping our streets cleaner than in previous years, with significant reductions in litter, graffiti and fly-posting. The council's innovative new app, Find It Fix It Love It, helps residents to instantly tell the council about issues that need to be fixed or cleared up.

including those on low and middle incomes, and affordability is one of the biggest reasons for people planning to move out of the borough.

There is enormous pressure on social housing, with over 20,000 families on the housing waiting list. Just under 40% of existing tenants in both council and other social housing want to move home, with the majority of these wishing to remain within the borough. In particular there is a shortage of suitable family housing, and we know that this has a disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic and Muslim families. There are also shortages in the number of wheelchair accessible homes for disabled people on the housing register.

Homelessness is getting harder to prevent, and overcrowding continues to be a problem. 16% of households have too few bedrooms, rising to 22% in the social rented sector, and over 42% of people planning to move want to do so because their current home is too small. These issues disproportionately affect black and minority ethnic households. Nonetheless, the council continues to re-house overcrowded families, and these are given high priority on the housing waiting list.

The housing landscape in Tower Hamlets has changed significantly over the last 30 years, with large swathes of the borough regenerated. There has been huge growth in the private rented sector and many residents are understandably concerned about the quality of homes, the insecurity of tenancies in this sector and the impact that large numbers of privately rented properties have on estates and communities, as well as high rents. The council has therefore committed to pursuing a landlord licensing scheme for Tower Hamlets with the aim of improving the quality of accommodation, having more influence over landlords in this sector, and taking action against those who exploit tenants unfairly.

We also recognise that improving housing should go hand in hand with other activities to improve the wellbeing and life chances of our residents, which is overwhelmingly affected by having a job. Increasing employment is another of our cross-cutting priorities, and we will build this into our development and housing activity, with all partners aiming to engage unemployed residents in activity that will help them towards work.

### **Taking pride in the local environment, making best use of community assets**

We have reduced litter, graffiti and fly-tipping. However, public satisfaction with the cleanliness of the local environment is not as high as we would like, and we want to understand and address the reasons for that. We also want to encourage and enable residents to recycle more, to catch up to rates in the rest of London.

We know that having quality community facilities and delivering great services is really important to residents. Now, more than ever, the borough must make the best use of its assets, particularly buildings, making sure they are being well used by the community as well as generating value for money. With population growth putting increasing pressure on these community resources, and public sector funding cuts make it harder to maintain and invest in them, the council and its partners must find innovative ways to utilise spaces, and to generate revenue and investment in local services and facilities.



## Current partnership commitments

There are a number of clear partnership priorities which are all contributing to making Tower Hamlets a great place to live, summarised below. These are captured by a range of strategic documents on housing and strategic planning and delivered by multiple partners. In addition, the Fairness Commission made a number of challenging recommendations on housing.

### Managing new development

- ➔ Develop a new Local Plan with planning policies to guide and manage future growth

### Build more affordable homes for local people and improve the quality of existing homes

- ➔ Build more affordable homes which meet the needs of all residents
- ➔ Develop new models of long-term investment in social housing
- ➔ Provide more homes to meet the needs of disabled people

- ➔ Improve the standard of private rented accommodation
- ➔ Keep all our council housing up to the Decent Homes standard

### Deliver key regeneration projects around the borough

- ➔ Begin the regeneration of Whitechapel by realising the Whitechapel Vision Masterplan
- ➔ Continue the regeneration of Poplar including projects at Poplar Baths, Crisp Street, Burdett, Aberfeldy and Bow Bridge
- ➔ Approve a Masterplan for South Quay
- ➔ Continue development of Blackwall Reach

### Reduce overcrowding and under-occupation

- ➔ Provide access to the right housing options at the right time

### Prevent people from becoming homeless, but support those who do

- ➔ Promote multi-agency working, early intervention and building resilience

### Create good quality community spaces and facilities

- ➔ Ensure the implementation of the new Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule for Tower Hamlets, whilst continuing to collect the London Mayor's CIL
- ➔ Develop new libraries, youth and leisure facilities
- ➔ Invest in parks and increase the number and quality of play spaces for children

### Making Tower Hamlets 'greener'

- ➔ Tackle air pollution by cutting CO2 emissions
- ➔ Increase the recycling rate
- ➔ Improve road safety
- ➔ Invest in cycling



# A fair and prosperous community

*Tower Hamlets will be a place where everyone, regardless of their background and circumstances, has the aspiration and opportunity to achieve their full potential*

## Achievements so far

### A thriving economy

- ➔ The employment rate is improving and is now the highest it has been for more than 10 years, narrowing the gap with the rest of London. The number of residents claiming Jobseekers Allowance is reducing in line with London, and the rate of child poverty has fallen significantly in the last 4 years. Regeneration programmes will fuel economic growth so that by 2030 there are likely to be around 100,000 more jobs than at present.

### Educational success

- ➔ Tower Hamlets continues to experience significant improvements in education attainment and the borough's schools have been identified as amongst the best urban schools in the world. GCSE results are now consistently above the national average, and at A Level the gap between Tower Hamlets and London has significantly narrowed, particularly for girls.

- ➔ More working age residents now have some kind of qualification, with 44% at degree level, which is above the London average.
- ➔ Local partners have worked successfully in recent years to reduce the number of 16-18 year-olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- ➔ The council has introduced Education Awards for post-16 students and Higher Education Awards to help students with the costs of university, and to offset the effect of changes to Government financial support for students.

### A commitment to fairness

- ➔ In 2012 the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission brought together independent local community leaders and external thinkers to engage residents, local stakeholders, businesses and experts in a debate about growth, economic inequality and increasing austerity. Their recommendations aimed to promote fairness and equality in employment, housing and money. In 2014, one year on from the publication of their report, the Fairness Commissioners expressed that they were proud and impressed with what had been achieved by local partners.



## The challenges we face

### High and persistent unemployment

Despite the buoyant economy and a rising employment rate, Tower Hamlets continues to have high and persistent levels of unemployment, particularly amongst women and amongst Bangladeshi and Somali residents. Over 12,000 people claim out of work benefits because of illness or disability, 6.2% of the working age population. Increasing employment is a cross-cutting priority for this Community Plan, and we need to make sure that the broadest possible coalition of organisations is assembled to work towards raising skills and incomes, and getting more people into work, with partners building these into every aspect of their activity, including as employers.

### Continuing to narrow the gap in educational attainment

Although we have made great gains, there is further progress to make for our young people. Post-16 results have started to improve but we are still slightly below the London average in

terms of performance. Early years attainment also continues to be a challenge, with some of the lowest results in London. Despite overall success, there are variations in GCSE results for some ethnic groups, with White British young people achieving below our targets.

Population growth means continued increases in demand for school places - by 2023, there will be the need for an additional 7,500 primary places and 4,500 secondary places. More free schools are opening, and there is continued pressure from Government for schools to switch to academy status. Tower Hamlets passionately believes that its schools are stronger working together, and with the local authority, to pursue ever greater educational attainment and fulfil the aspirations of local young people.

Alongside improving attainment, we believe that schools can also play a crucial role in developing employment skills in young people and helping them access careers support.

### Helping everyone benefit from growth

Despite the optimistic economic outlook for the borough, we know that many local people are still concerned about the cost of living and making ends meet. Tower Hamlets is the third most deprived area in the country. While levels of child poverty have decreased significantly in recent years, they remain the highest in London, affecting 39% of local children. 1 in 5 households has an annual income of less than £15,000, and over half have an income of less than £30,000. At the other end of the scale, 15% of Tower Hamlets households have an income of more than £60,000 per year.

Although there has been a fall in the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, more Tower Hamlets residents claim benefits than on average in London, with in-work poverty a significant concern. About one third of housing benefit claimants are in paid work.

As a result of the Fairness Commission's recommendations, one of the growing areas of partnership working in Tower Hamlets is reducing the cost of living for families on low incomes by promoting digital and financial inclusion. This is necessary to help tackle the "poverty premium" that these families suffer from as consumers, due to lacking internet access and bank accounts.

## **Welfare reform**

Welfare reform poses one of the biggest challenges to the partnership, in terms of the economic wellbeing of residents as well as the financial impact on the council and housing providers. Partners need to work together to understand and demonstrate its impact on local people, as well as supporting residents through the changes. The government's welfare reforms have disproportionately affected local residents with over 700 households subject to the benefit cap and a further 2300 losing income because of the under-occupancy reduction (often referred to as the "Bedroom Tax"). Locally commissioned research estimates that the cumulative impact of all welfare reforms means that households claiming benefits are now £1670 per year, or £32 per week, worse off. These impacts affect over 40,000 households, over half will be households where someone is in work.

The introduction of Universal Credit, and the transition from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments has already begun. Improving digital and financial inclusion are issues particularly relevant to these changes, as benefit claims become online by default and monthly payments are made directly to residents. In terms of the services which support people into work and to progress, feedback suggests they are still too disconnected and not focused enough on the needs of individuals. We know that employment at living wage levels is the only sustainable way to mitigate the impact of welfare reform. A commitment has therefore been made to create more integrated employment services. This will be pursued by a range of partners to create a holistic response to residents in need of

some extra help – not just in terms of employment services, but housing and welfare advice, health and wellbeing, family support, English and maths skills, financial and digital inclusion and childcare. This partnership approach will be essential as we move towards the next phase of welfare reform: the national roll-out of Universal Credit.

## **Connecting businesses with their community**

In its report, the Fairness Commission advocated much stronger links between locally-based businesses and Tower Hamlets residents, through employment opportunities, work experience for young people, contract opportunities for local SMEs, and a better matching of corporate social responsibility activities with local needs. Going forward, this will be driven by a new Business Charter for Tower Hamlets, which will bring together businesses with local public and voluntary sector agencies encouraging everyone to 'buy local, employ local, support local'.

## **Creating successful high streets**

Successful high streets and town centres are an essential part of a thriving local economy and have been the subject of numerous reviews at a local, regional and national level, including the independent review by Mary Portas. Residents and businesses alike want to see a variety of shops and other businesses which meet the needs of local communities and offer a range of jobs for local people, in a pleasant and safe environment. At the same time, they want the proliferation of gambling outlets, fast food takeaways and payday lenders on local high streets kept in check. The council has only recently gained limited powers to directly influence this, and we have begun work to consider what 'successful high streets' means in Tower Hamlets and how we can achieve these together.

# Current partnership commitments

Partnership priorities and activities in pursuit of a fair and prosperous community are captured by the Enterprise and Employment Strategies, the work of the Economic Task Force, the welfare reform task group, the Financial Inclusive Tower Hamlets Partnership and the Children and Families Board.

## Enable children and young people to achieve their full potential

- ➔ Provide free school meals for all primary school children in the borough
- ➔ Keep pushing our GCSE and A-Level results above the national average
- ➔ Increase aspiration and educational achievement post-16 and on to university
- ➔ Expand our schools and increase the number of school places
- ➔ Deliver ambitious targets for expansion of affordable childcare provision

## Better support residents through welfare reform, and into work, through an integrated employment and support service for Tower Hamlets

- ➔ Reimagine local employment services so they work better for local people
- ➔ Enable disabled residents and those with physical and mental health conditions to work
- ➔ Become an online, more digitally inclusive borough

## Help reduce the costs of living and eradicate the 'premium' faced by many residents

- ➔ Promote financial inclusion through the Financially Inclusive Tower Hamlets Partnership
- ➔ Support the development of the credit union and a Community Banking Partnership for Tower Hamlets

## Develop the skills of residents

- ➔ Generate more apprenticeships, traineeships and other opportunities for young people
- ➔ Develop skills provision for adults needing to re-enter the labour market or upskill
- ➔ Increase the number of employment opportunities for disabled residents

## Develop a new Business Charter, and encourage businesses to 'employ local, supply local and support local'

- ➔ Support small and start-up businesses by developing low-cost work space and creating business start-up grants.
- ➔ Encourage more businesses to pay the London Living Wage
- ➔ Develop a successful high streets strategy

## Build strong community leadership and social capital through a thriving voluntary and community sector

- ➔ VCS shape strategy and services and co-produce local services
- ➔ VCS resilience and financial sustainability
- ➔ Monitor, evaluate and demonstrate impact

# A safe and cohesive community

*Tower Hamlets will be a safer place where people feel safer, get on better together and difference is not seen as a threat, but a core strength of the borough*

## Achievements so far

### Falling crime rates overall

- ➔ In 2013/14, total notifiable offences had dropped by over a third from their peak in 2002/03, despite the dramatic growth in population over that time. Personal robbery and residential burglary in particular have reduced, and crime rates in Tower Hamlets are better than in some of our neighbouring boroughs.

### A strong sense of community cohesion

- ➔ The vast majority of residents (78%) think that people from different backgrounds get on well together, up from 69% in 2009.
- ➔ Our well-developed and responsive approach to cohesion and tension is recognised by external bodies, and we have effectively resisted organised attempts to divide our communities. This is complemented by a well-established Prevent Programme, led by the council in collaboration with a number of local partners.

- ➔ Working with students, their parents and the wider community, our schools promote tolerance and empathy between different groups, so students understand and reject all forms of unacceptable influence.
- ➔ Tower Hamlets is recognised as an exemplar of equality practice, and the council was recently assessed as Excellent against the LGA Equality Framework for Local Government.

## The challenges we face

### Addressing fear of crime

As we have reduced crime levels, fear of crime has also fallen considerably. Nonetheless, this remains the top personal concern of residents. There are strong links between drug dependency and acquisitive crime, and between alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour and violence. We know that tackling problem drinking and drug use is key to reducing these related crimes and reducing resident fear of crime further.

There are a small number of gangs operating in particular geographical areas of Tower Hamlets which are responsible for a significant proportion of youth violence and drug dealing. These contribute to fears about community safety for local residents.



### Protecting vulnerable groups

The partnership has recently developed a new strategic approach to tackling violence against women and girls, recognising the range of agencies involved in this work and the need for strong partnership working. Last year there was a 20% increase in reported domestic violence incidents, which may be due to an increase in reporting rather than actual incidents, and clearly validates the priority placed on this area of work.

During our consultation process, people with learning disabilities in particular said personal safety was a key priority for them, as well as increased awareness and understanding of learning disabilities amongst those working in public services.

## Current partnership commitments

Partnership priorities under this theme are agreed and pursued through the Community Safety Partnership Board, as set out in the Community Safety Partnership Plan.

### Reduce acquisitive crime and anti-social behaviour by tackling problem drinking and drug use

- ➔ Increase the number of THEOs and create joint task forces between the police and council to target hotspots
- ➔ Tackle drugs and alcohol misuse
- ➔ Create safer streets by maintaining our local police presence and improve lighting
- ➔ Address fear of crime and public confidence in the Police and other law enforcement services

### Limit local gangs and the impact they have on youth violence and fear of crime

- ➔ Implement our Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy, to tackle gangs and serious youth violence

### Strengthen partnership work to reduce domestic violence and violence against women and girls

- ➔ Increase investment in victim support and encourage reporting

### Promote community cohesion

- ➔ Continue to deliver a Preventing Violent Extremism programme
- ➔ Increase the number of hate crime reporting sites

### Find solutions to increase cycling safety on busy roads

- ➔ Develop ten-year strategy for improving cycle safety
- ➔ Add segregated cycle lane capacity where feasible, subject to local servicing needs
- ➔ Maintain high profile cycle safety awareness campaigns

# A healthy and supportive community

*Tower Hamlets will be a place where people are supported to live healthier, more independent lives and the risk of harm and neglect to vulnerable children and adults is reduced*

## Achievements so far

### Improvements in healthy living

- ➔ We have worked to improve the circumstances and surroundings which affect residents' health. For example, we have increased and improved green spaces, increased the availability of healthy food, reduced the availability of counterfeit tobacco, alcohol and drugs, widened access to sexual health services, and ensured that people are informed and empowered to lead healthy lives.
- ➔ In early years, more babies are breast feeding, childhood immunisation rates are amongst the highest in the country (having risen from below the national average), and teenage pregnancy rates have fallen.
- ➔ More than 11,000 residents have been supported to stop smoking over the last four years.
- ➔ We have made dramatic progress in monitoring and controlling blood pressure for people with diabetes and coronary heart disease (CHD), with amongst the best rates of testing in England.

- ➔ Our performance has improved from amongst the worst in the country to amongst the best in prescribing for high blood, pressure, the proportion of those with CHD suffering from high blood pressure, and the proportion dying from CHD.
- ➔ Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group was ranked as the best in England in 2013/14.
- ➔ We now have the best rate in England for identifying and measuring respiratory diseases, having previously been in the lowest 20%. This is crucial in enabling these diseases to be properly diagnosed and managed.
- ➔ We have a dedicated Mental Health Strategy setting out how partners will work together to improve outcomes for people with mental health problems. We have a new primary care mental health service, and we are strengthening those services for mothers and babies, as well as improving the partnership approach to working with children and young people with a mental health problem. Our services to help people stop smoking and deal with obesity have specific provision for those with serious mental illness, and we have established a psychiatric liaison service at the Royal London Hospital for those attending A&E or requiring inpatient care.
- ➔ Progress has been made with dementia diagnosis, with Tower Hamlets now having the second highest diagnosis rate in London. We have a range of services for people with dementia and their carers, including specific clinical support to care homes and four "dementia cafes" running each month, including two specifically for Bangladeshi residents.



- ➔ We have also awarded grants to user-led groups to help them provide peer support to others suffering mental health problems. Our Health and Wellbeing Board was the first in the UK to sign the Time to Change Pledge to stamp out mental health stigma and discrimination as a partnership.
- ➔ NHS Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group has been recognised by Britain's most prestigious health sector awards for its successes as an organisation, and in improving care through technology.

### Improving social care and integrating it with health services

- ➔ We remain committed to the health, well-being and independence of vulnerable people and have developed a very successful reablement service to promote this. All users of our services who need social care support will continue to receive intensive, free reablement input to enhance their independence, choice and control at the start of their social care provision. Local surveys show that the quality of life for users of adult social care services is improving, with more residents having greater control over their package of support.

- ➔ Children's social care services are also working well, and both safeguarding and Looked After Children services have been rated as good by Ofsted.
- ➔ Local services are putting people in control of their health and wellbeing, personalising care and supporting the self-management of conditions and the promotion of independence. This will build resilience and independence in individuals and families - a cross-cutting priority for the Community Plan.
- ➔ Tower Hamlets is part of an integrated care programme for north east London given pioneer status by the Department of Health. Through this, we are ensuring that social care and health services are provided seamlessly, irrespective of the provider. We also now have mental health professionals working in integrated health and social care teams for people who have multiple health needs.

## The challenges we face

### Persistent health inequalities

Reducing the inequalities in health and wellbeing experienced by so many Tower Hamlets residents is one of the biggest challenges facing the borough. Although life expectancy has risen over the last decade it continues to be lower than the London and national averages, and significant health inequalities persist. We know that people in Tower Hamlets tend to become ill at an earlier age and this is reflected in the 'healthy life expectancy' figure which is significantly lower than the national averages. 13.5% of residents have a disability which limits their daily activities, and Tower Hamlets has a higher number of residents with a severe disability compared with London and England, despite our relatively young population. Tower Hamlets has some of the highest death rates due to cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic lung disease in the country, as well as the highest infection rates of HIV, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections.



## Ensuring good mental health and wellbeing

Good mental health and wellbeing is fundamental to life outcomes and quality of life. Tower Hamlets has a high prevalence of risk factors that can contribute to the development of mental health problems in individuals, for example long term unemployment, homelessness, and harmful alcohol use.

Tower Hamlets has a very high prevalence of mental health problems. We have the fourth highest proportion of people with depression in London, the fourth highest incidence of first episode psychosis, and the highest incidence of psychosis in east London, according to GP registers. In total there are approximately 30,000 adults estimated to have symptoms of a common mental health problem in the borough, and between 3,400 and 15,000 children at any one time are likely to be in touch with professionals due to concerns about their mental health.

The impact of mental health problems on individuals, families and communities can be profound. Mental illness has the same effect on life-expectancy as smoking, and a greater effect than obesity. Amongst people in work, mental illness accounts for nearly half of all absenteeism; and amongst people out of work, almost half are on incapacity benefit on account of a mental health problem.

## A focus on health across the life course – from birth to death

Maternal health – before, during and after pregnancy – and the first few years of a child's life are a critical period for a child's longer term health and wellbeing. Infant mortality in Tower Hamlets is not significantly different to the rest of London, but more babies are born with a low birth weight. This is not surprising given the correlation between birth weight and deprivation. In terms of behaviours which affect the health of a baby, 4% of mothers smoke during pregnancy, but this rises to 16% amongst white mothers. However there are good levels of

breastfeeding, significantly higher than the national averages, and immunisation take up for under 5s is amongst the highest in the country. Unfortunately, Tower Hamlets has some of the highest levels of child obesity in the country, with 13% of children in Reception year obese, increasing to 25% by Year 6.

The health of older people in Tower Hamlets needs particular focus. A survey of residents showed that more older people in Tower Hamlets are limited in their day-to-day activities compared with the average for London and England. 80% of over 80s have at least one chronic condition, and 35% have at least three at the same time. We strongly suspect dementia is underdiagnosed, and Tower Hamlets has the second highest stroke mortality rate in London. 50% of older people live below the poverty line and a high proportion live alone.

There is therefore significant concern about loneliness and isolation of many older residents, and the effect that has on their health. Furthermore, only 10% of older people consume the recommended level of fruit and vegetables and only 20% get the recommended amount of exercise.



## Challenges to healthy living in Tower Hamlets

We know that there are higher levels of 'lifestyle risk factors' in Tower Hamlets compared to elsewhere. There are higher levels of tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, problem drinking amongst those who drink alcohol, risky sexual behaviours and drug use. These can be made worse by the environment we live in. For example, there are 42 junk food outlets per secondary school in Tower Hamlets.

The spectrum of factors influencing the health of our population is broad, and so we need all partners to take a part in improving this across the full range of their work. For this reason, healthier lives is a cross-cutting priority which we will be focusing on over the next four years.

## High numbers of carers

Unpaid carers provide essential and highly-valued support for family members, neighbours and friends with needs. The 2011 Census identified that in Tower Hamlets, 7.6% of our residents are in this position. Of those, 43% provide more than 20 hours of care a week, and a quarter provide

over 50 hours a week – much higher than the London and England averages. 3% are young carers, 29% are aged 50 and over, and 9% are aged 65 and over.

The Care Act has increased the responsibilities of local agencies in relation to carers, ensuring they are given more support and encouraged not to neglect their own health and wellbeing.

## Continued structural change and financial pressures in the health economy

There have been significant changes to the NHS, with responsibility for commissioning most local health services shifting to Clinical Commissioning Groups comprised of local GPs and other health professionals. In the wake of this, the establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, has enabled local partners to work better together to address health inequalities and consider much more seriously how we can embed health considerations in all aspects of policy. Change will continue over the next few years with the implementation of the Care Act and the continuing shift towards integration between health and social care services. Whilst all of this can create opportunities, it also presents a huge challenge in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of local health services. Financial pressures on health services are significant, with NHS and social care services facing continued demand pressures and no real increase in funding.

# Current partnership commitments

Ensuring the residents of Tower Hamlets are healthy and well supported is the responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board, a statutory partnership body, as well as the Children and Families Partnership Board. Their priorities are captured by the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Families Plan.

## Ensure a healthy start for every child

- ➔ Promote maternal health and people's experiences of maternity services
- ➔ Reduce infant mortality and promote infant health
- ➔ Ensure that all children are physically, emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively ready for school

## Empower people to live healthy lives together

- ➔ Tackle obesity and promote physical activity
- ➔ Reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and substance misuse
- ➔ Promote good sexual health

## Promote good mental health and wellbeing

- ➔ Build resilience, mental health and wellbeing for all
- ➔ Provide high quality treatment and support
- ➔ Support people to live well with a mental health problem

## Early identification and person-centred care for people with disabilities, long-term conditions and cancer

- ➔ Create better care at home to help residents stay out of hospital
- ➔ Embed promotion of healthy lives into health and social care pathways through 'Every Contact Counts' programme
- ➔ Increase early awareness of symptoms of cancer, and reduce delays in cancer pathways

## Integration of health and social care to provide joined-up and person-centred support

- ➔ Work together to support people's independence and help them live safely in their own homes where possible
- ➔ Work with the local voluntary and community sector to take individuals' wider needs and circumstances into account
- ➔ Explore joint health and social care personal budgets

## Influence the wider social and environmental determinants of health

- ➔ Limit the impact of 'unhealthy' businesses on our high streets
- ➔ Tackle loneliness and reduce isolation amongst older residents

## Safeguard children through focus on sexual exploitation, harmful practices, children with disabilities and implementing a new neglect strategy.

## Working with neighbouring boroughs to ensure safe, sustainable and high-quality health services

- ➔ Improve the health of our residents and help them take control of their own health
- ➔ Provide more co-ordinated health, social and mental health care
- ➔ Prepare for our growing and ageing population

# What we've heard

The Community Plan Your Borough Your Voice consultation has done much to generate debate, raise awareness and develop local partnerships. From late summer 2014, we carried out a wide range of exercises to canvass the views of residents and other stakeholders in the borough on what we should prioritise in this Plan. Local people of all ages and backgrounds came together to talk about the issues that matter to them.

We asked residents at Community Ward Forums to feed in their views, and held an event for Community Champion Coordinators. However, it was also important to talk with residents who are not engaged on a regular basis with the council or its partners, and so special events were held at

markets across the borough, as well as at Asda on the Isle of Dogs. We met with representatives of a wide range of service user groups, third sector organisations and interest groups. Members of the partnership also discussed the Plan at meetings of their themed Delivery Groups, as did the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting in 2015.

Alongside the above, a web-based survey was undertaken which was publicised online, in East End Life and at the above events. We also held two full-day in-depth events with residents, looking at service priorities in detail.





## Housing for all

Residents are worried about the affordability of homes being developed in the borough, with many households on low wages feeling that they are beyond the reach of most people who want to live in Tower Hamlets. Suitable housing options that meet the needs of people with learning disabilities, mobility issues or mental health problems are specific challenges.

Residents want the partnership to secure the continued existence of mixed communities through supporting a range of affordable housing choices that reflect the people who live and aspire to reside in the borough. They also want less development of high value housing which promotes gentrification and creates a divide, leaving certain communities behind.

Residents also highlighted the importance of issues such as drugs misuse and anti-social behaviour which can blight individual and community life on estates, and emphasised how good housing and good living conditions is fundamental to wellbeing and cohesion.

## Equality of opportunity and when managing austerity

The importance of ensuring that public sector funding is distributed fairly across groups was raised by local communities. Residents feel that increased transparency in decisions over public savings should be a crucial aspect of the council's and partnership's commitment to fairness. Local people also highlighted the issue of fairness when attempting to address the negative impacts of population growth within the borough. One resident said, "Community Champions are a good example of how to get involved in local action and setting priorities." Residents highlighted that public services should recognise the time and effort of people that save public money, such as carers and volunteers, and should help empower and enable these individuals to continue making a difference to people's lives. For example, a resident told us: "I like the idea of giving more small grants for faith and charity groups involved with young people which build on the good work being done in the community." To this end, local groups want to work more closely with the partnership to fundraise from external sources and maximise inward investment in the borough. Residents also view culturally specific services as key to tackling problems amongst some communities who are wary of the authorities, such as addressing the stigma associated with domestic violence.

Local people want the partnership to be mindful of the rising costs of living which may prompt households to turn towards, and become dependent on, unhealthy safety nets such as loan sharks. Residents want to live longer and lead better lives, and understand the importance of wider environmental factors such as healthy eating which can impact on this. They want healthy food available at affordable prices.



## Enterprising Tower Hamlets and improving resilience

Residents highlighted the importance of support to secure sustainable employment including to address gaps in knowledge around how to access jobs, soft skills and networks, especially since employment is closely linked to welfare reforms. They feel greater investment and support tailored for disabled people to access the job market is required. Many community and voluntary groups underscore the fact that the financial services sector is not the only provider of jobs in the borough, and that the opportunities offered by other types of business in the borough should be maximised for local people. There is also concern that low aspirations amongst some within the borough's population remain unchallenged and that education should continue to play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty and raising ambitions. Residents told us: "By working with communities you increased our local skills and

confidence and a sense of pride starts to grow where people become positive about their future." A lack of childcare provision, specifically affordable childcare to enable parents to work, is a pressing concern for local residents. This provides a significant barrier to employment, particularly for single parents.

There was anxiety amongst consultees about the high and persistent levels of in-work poverty in Tower Hamlets. This is why they want the London Living Wage to be adopted borough-wide by employers to help ensure a fairer society. Residents care about helping people manage their money as this is important to help households out of debt and into saving – the provision of expert advice to solve deep-seated financial or housing problems is important.

## Cleaner, safer Tower Hamlets

The value of the borough's public realm as the space in which public life takes place was highlighted. It helps to deliver far reaching social, economic and environmental benefits. Taking pride in the local environment means that residents want the council to act more punitively on people who litter, fly tip or do not recycle. They also want to see a reduction in the number of cars on the roads and a reduction in speeding on residential streets which poses a threat to safety.

Concerns about the impact on quality of life of anti-social behaviour and drug use were a particular theme of resident feedback. Many living on estates wanted to see more action taken by partners to address these issues, and for communities to be given support to address them.

# Working better together

## Cross-cutting partnership priorities for 2015 onwards

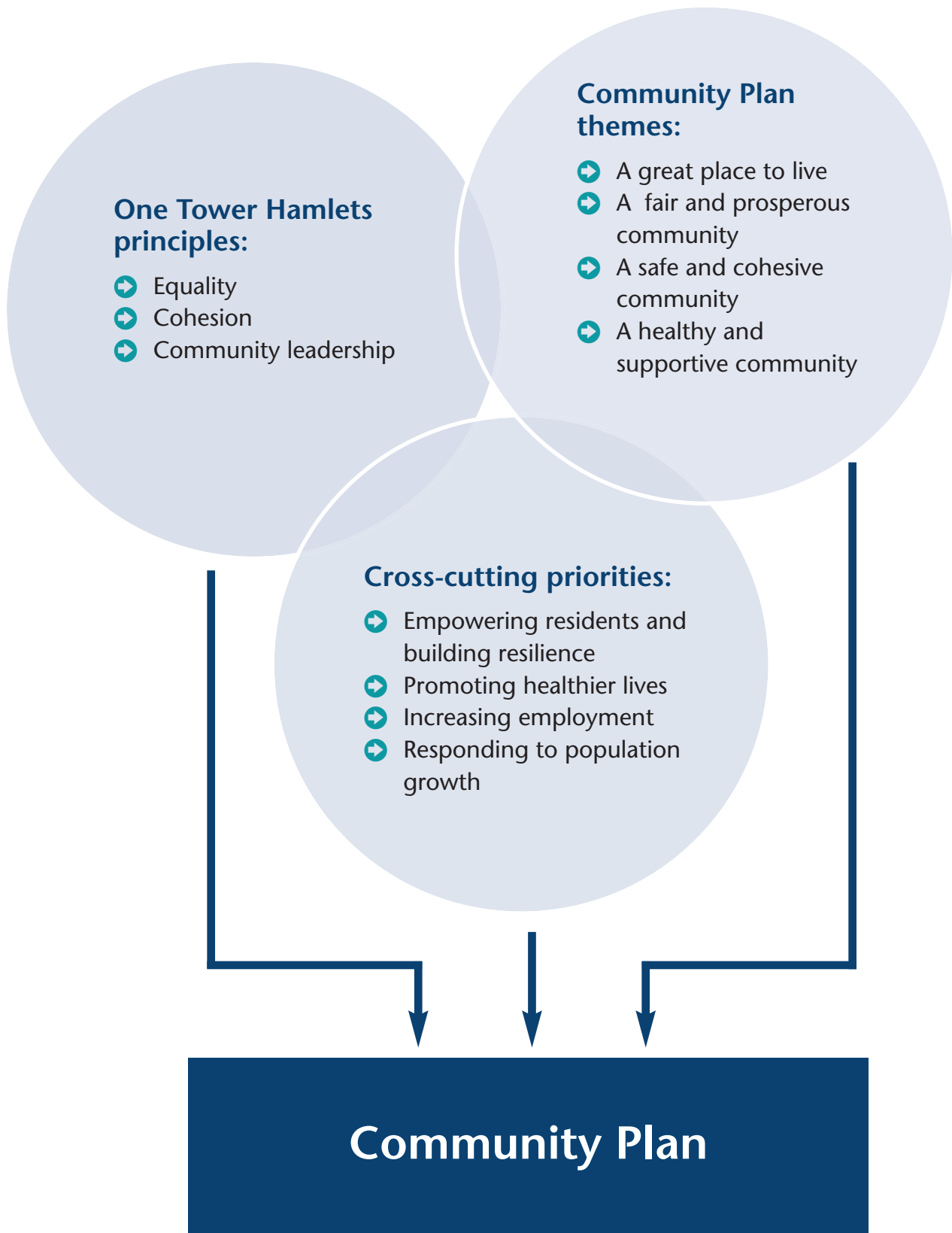


We have reviewed our achievements, current challenges and existing priorities, in relation to the four Community Plan themes. Partnership working to pursue these priorities is well embedded and overseen by a range of partnership bodies – our Community Plan Delivery Groups – including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Economic Taskforce, the Children and Families Partnership Board, the Community Safety Partnership Board and the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum. Each of these bodies has a clear set of priorities, action plans and a network of sub-groups which drive forward partnership work in their area.

In developing a Community Plan for 2015 onwards, partners have emphasised the need for something which builds on and complements our existing partnership work, rather than replacing it. For this reason the Community Plan themes have been retained. The only change is the aim of a 'fair and prosperous community'. All partners wanted to reflect the contribution of the Fairness Commission to the debate about economic growth in Tower Hamlets, and emphasise that the community wants to see everyone benefiting from economic growth and prosperity, with a fair distribution of resources and opportunities across the community, not growth at any cost.

To be more than a summary of ongoing work, the Community Plan needs a purpose of its own. In developing this plan we therefore looked at areas of work that do not fit neatly into the work programme of one of the existing Community Plan Delivery Groups or strategies, and at challenges which have been resistant to improvement in the past. Partners want to use this new plan to accelerate progress and harness the efforts of all partners around a few key shared goals, thereby adding value to existing work. Partners considered a range of areas and challenges which met these criteria, and developed a set of high level and cross-cutting priorities which will be the focus of collaborative partnership action for the lifetime of this plan. It is the intention that these priorities will galvanise and motivate partners, strengthening and deepening our focus in these areas and making a real difference locally. The four key priorities agreed are set out in the remainder of this Plan. More detailed delivery plans will be developed for each of the agreed collaborative action projects.

The following diagram illustrates the close relationship between these priorities and current partnership work, as well as the One Tower Hamlets vision, and how these elements work together to form the Community Plan.





# Priority 1: Empowering residents and building resilience

We know that partnership organisations need to do everything in their power to enable residents to support themselves in all aspects of their lives. This is especially true in a context of significantly reducing public sector resources. The more resilient our communities and the better residents can support themselves and each other, the more partner organisations can do with the resources we have. We recognise that the nature of some services in the past has sometimes led to people becoming too dependent on them, which is not good for that person, the community nor the service overall.

By making this a cross-cutting priority in the 2015 Community Plan, we can bring partners together to consider all opportunities to create more engaged and resilient communities. This will be through a better understanding of when and how residents can be involved in designing and delivering public services and how we can support this fully. We already have a dynamic voluntary and community sector, but we need to all come together to develop a collective approach and build capacity in that sector further. This may involve helping voluntary sector organisations run as efficiently as possible, maximise the use of their assets and engage more with the private sector. Co-production is an important element of this, and we will ensure that this is a key part of commissioning undertaken by partners. The Council's renewed Mainstream Grants Process for 2015-18 is embedding these principles, with a theme particularly focused on greater community engagement and resilience.

An important way which we know builds the resilience of individuals and families is a focus on early intervention and prevention. We will continue to work with children, young people

and their families to understand and improve their wellbeing, before they reach crisis point.

In social care, we are investing in technology and integration of services which will reduce the numbers of people being admitted to hospital and delay their need for care. We are also rolling out personal budgets across health and social care. We have identified that some groups are particularly isolated from their communities and that work to tackle loneliness and isolation can build resilience, improve wellbeing and reduce demand for higher cost health and care provision.

There are also opportunities for communities to contribute to and influence service provision and decisions - for example, Healthwatch represents residents in sitting on the borough's Health and Wellbeing Board, and ward forums offer people a chance to influence their local services. We will also be training people to research and feed back residents' perceptions on health issues and local services.

We recognise that it is more difficult for some groups to engage with public sector organisations, and so we support a range of forums to help bridge the gap. The council is committed to hearing the voices of often excluded communities and ensuring that 'every voice matters'. To do this, we will be formalising funding for these forums, and councillors will be more involved in championing their work. These forums will also be increasingly looking to involve people from the community in their activities, in order to raise their profile and reach out to their communities, so that they are as representative as possible.

Partners are also committed, through the multi-agency Digital Inclusion Strategy recently agreed by the council's cabinet, to facilitating access to the internet for residents, including providing wi-fi in key locations, and giving them the skills to be able to use it. This can empower residents in a variety of ways, from enabling financial inclusion

(online banking offers accessible and instant tools for money management), to allowing them to have their say in consultations (which are increasingly online, as part of the government's "digital by default" agenda).

Within the context of this range of ongoing work, it is proposed that the Partnership focus on the following collaborative action projects for the life of this Community Plan:

- ➔ Addressing loneliness and isolation through a partnership-wide action plan.
- ➔ Engaging all partners in the delivery of the Tower Hamlets Digital Inclusion Strategy to make Tower Hamlets a digitally inclusive borough. This will include provision of free Wi-Fi in our public spaces, and we will investigate the provision of Wi-Fi or fibre-optic internet in social housing blocks. Support through digital skills training and champions will also be increased.
- ➔ Developing a strategy to enhance community engagement. We will review the Community Champions model and also look at other ways of engaging with the community and partners, and in the design and delivery of local services. This will include meetings in the community, active engagement with existing groups and the encouragement of active community groups in areas, and for sectors, where this is limited.
- ➔ Enabling individuals and community organisations to apply for funding to help reduce the energy use and carbon emissions in their area, as well as to provide other benefits.

**To measure progress towards building resilience we will develop a set of outcome measures relating to the above activity.**

## Priority 2: Promoting healthier lives

In line with national trends, life expectancy in Tower Hamlets has been improving year on year. However, health inequalities between Tower Hamlets and the rest of the country remain high and there are also significant health inequalities within the borough that closely correlate with levels of socioeconomic deprivation.

Tackling health inequalities requires a whole system approach recognising the importance of wider determinants of health (e.g. income, employment, education), healthy environments, (e.g. housing, physical environment), strong communities and integrated services promoting prevention and early intervention. This approach also recognises that behaviours impacting on health, such as diet, physical activity and smoking, are strongly influenced by the environments that people live in. Understanding the most effective ways of utilising our resources to change those environments requires robust and reliable evidence, and so we will add to the data on which we base our activity.

We will put health and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do across the partnership. By making healthy lives a partnership priority we aim to build on existing work and develop a borough-wide focus on healthy living, with all partners considering their role and impact on improving health and wellbeing in the borough. For example, we are seeking to make the whole borough a car no-idling zone. We will also reduce the numbers of people killed and seriously injured on our roads by imposing a speed limit of 20mph on residential streets across the borough.

In primary schools, Tower Hamlets is leading the way in supporting health and wellbeing. This includes offering nutritious free school meals to all pupils and by equipping staff to address emotional and mental health issues. As agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board in its Healthy

Lives action plan for 2015/16, the Healthy Schools programme is being expanded to take in sexual health and relationship issues, as well as drugs, alcohol and tobacco use. We are also developing a health offer to young people which will be available through our youth centres.

In its action plan, the Health and Wellbeing Board has also committed to make drugs and alcohol services for all residents more joined-up, and to increase screening for sexually transmitted infections and improve diagnosis of Hepatitis B and C cases. To complement this, we will also increase the uptake of contraception.

We aim to better harness the power of local people and peer support. We are developing a community-led pilot programme to identify where older residents are suffering from isolation and loneliness, as evidence suggests this has very real implications for their health and wellbeing. In each of the three neighbourhoods participating, we will develop networks of local people to understand and take action to tackle loneliness. More broadly, the community will lead a programme to tackle poor mental health, raising awareness of this issue and helping to identify those at risk, as well as helping those in need of support to access it.

We will seek new ways to achieve the environmental and behavioural change needed to improve health and wellbeing, bringing a strong partnership focus to making progress against issues where this has been challenging. On childhood obesity, for example, the Healthy Lives action plan sets out that we will help children and families manage their weight, and increase access to healthy food that is also affordable. We will also make walking an easier and more attractive option for getting around the borough, and the Play Streets initiative will make it easier for young people to enjoy sport and physical activity in their local areas.

Within the context of this range of ongoing work, it is proposed that the Partnership focus on the following collaborative action projects for the life of this Community Plan:

- ➔ Delivering a cross-Partnership campaign to 'get Tower Hamlets more active', which will include a focus on:
  - ➔ encouraging walking and cycling
  - ➔ enhanced use of parks, sport and leisure facilities
  - ➔ improving road safety
  - ➔ supporting people with disabilities to be more active.
  
- ➔ Establishing a campaign for healthy food, focusing on:
  - ➔ tackling fast food prevalence
  - ➔ increasing options for accessing healthy food.

**To measure progress towards promoting healthier lives we will develop a set of outcome measures relating to the above activity.**

## Priority 3: Increasing employment

Employment rates have improved dramatically in Tower Hamlets and across east London, but the borough still has some of the lowest rates of employment in the country, particularly amongst women and some minority ethnic groups. We know that unemployment due to ill health, especially mental ill health, is a huge issue and a significant challenge for the partnership. Whilst there are many local partners doing a lot of work to help more residents into work, employment underpins wellbeing and life chances to such an extent that there is real benefit from bringing a broader range of organisations together on this agenda.

There are a large number of Tower Hamlets residents who have low skills, have not worked for some time and are a long way from being 'job-ready'. All partners can play a role, making every contact count, engaging the unemployed residents they work with in some form of activity, programme or learning – encouraging and supporting them to move a step closer to work. For example, the council, Tower Hamlets College, Jobcentre Plus and other partners are already working together to prepare residents with a range of relevant skills and support to help them compete in the local job market.

Young people can now access progression support, including specialist careers guidance where necessary, in our youth centres; and careers advisers help those on the Positive Activities for Young People programme plan their next steps. We need to continue to embed employment skills and careers guidance into work with young people and their families in schools.

We also need to build employment activities into healthcare pathways and in particular into recovery from mental ill health.

Training should be a viable and attractive option for residents who can benefit from it. For example, the council, schools and the National Apprenticeship Service plan to work together to create more local apprenticeships.

An identified barrier to work for many families is affordable and accessible childcare. This issue was identified by the Fairness Commission, and further work is needed to progress this. Flexibility of working hours to accommodate childcare responsibilities was also raised in the course of the public consultation.

We also plan to engage more local employers through our networks and supply chains, and bring a stronger employment focus to regeneration, development and housing activities. Partners can also play a significant role

in increasing employment through their activities including their own recruitment and employment practices.

This priority will also require us to engage and reach out to businesses more, successfully engaging them in a range of agendas which meet the needs of their business as well as those of the local community, through our new Business Charter, "Tower Hamlets Works".

As a partnership, we recognise that we can make the greatest impact on increasing employment by working together, pooling our resources and integrating our services. For this reason, we will bring together all employment advisory services into one community hub, along with other relevant support and outreach. This will also facilitate the sharing of information about available jobs, acknowledged by partners as crucial in providing employment support.

Within the context of this range of ongoing work, it is proposed that the Partnership focus on the following collaborative action projects for the life of this Community Plan:

- ➔ Delivering a cross-Partnership Integrated Employment service that addresses broader needs which can act as a barrier to employment (eg skills, housing, health, money management, welfare reform advice). We will do this by piloting services into Whitechapel and Chrisp Street Idea Stores, introducing a triage-like first contact system with a view to delivering this model more widely across a range of appropriate locations.
- ➔ Developing a new approach to improving the local childcare offer and making it more affordable.

**To measure progress towards increasing employment we will develop a set of outcome measures relating to the above activity.**

## Priority 4: Responding to population growth

Tower Hamlets has experienced the fastest growing population in the country in recent years, and this fast-paced growth is expected to continue. The current population of 272,000 is expected to rise to 320,000 by 2022 and to over 350,000 by 2033. As the population is growing its profile is changing – much of the growth is driven by an increase in the number of young working professionals. Tower Hamlets has the highest proportion of residents aged 21-28 of anywhere in London, and the lowest proportion of residents aged 40 and over.

Although Tower Hamlets has a low number of older residents compared to other boroughs, their number will increase over the coming years, particularly the number of residents aged 85 and older. The growth in the number of much older residents will put increasing pressure on services for that age group, particularly adult social care services. We need joint approaches to developing infrastructure and managing service demand, working together to ensure effective use of limited resources.

Tower Hamlets has long been a very diverse borough and is currently the 16th most diverse local authority area in the country, with 43% of residents born outside the UK, 90 languages spoken and a high level of population churn. This growing and changing population puts increasing pressure on local services and infrastructure. It is fuelled by the building of new private homes, which does not relieve the enormous pressures on affordable housing. We aim to secure new affordable homes over the next four years, while ensuring that the impact of new development on communities is taken into account in the new Local Plan. These will be delivered by a combination of the council and

housing associations, as well as by private developers contributing as a result of planning agreements, and around 30% will have three or more bedrooms for larger families.

An increasing proportion of residents are living in Tower Hamlets' growing private rented sector. There will be a strong focus on improving conditions in this sector, including a landlord licensing scheme, with action taken against landlords who exploit their tenants unfairly.

As partners we need to ensure that we maintain quality of life in a borough which is growing and changing so quickly. This includes a planned and coordinated approach to delivering infrastructure that meets the needs of new and existing residents, workers and visitors. To this end, we are planning for more health facilities, including GP surgeries, as well as new primary and secondary school places. We are also planning to improve green spaces, transport connections, community facilities and other elements of the borough's infrastructure. Existing funding mechanisms such as the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 will be used to secure and deliver some of the infrastructure needed. We are additionally seeking other funding mechanisms and opportunities to deliver the necessary infrastructure.

Our Whitechapel Vision illustrates how we want development to progress in Tower Hamlets, as along with new homes, this will lead to the creation of new public spaces by 2023. Local employment and affordable workspace development will be integral to the regeneration of the area.

The above will form part of a new Local Plan, which will be prepared to respond to the challenges of growth in our borough, and will include planning policies to manage new development. These policies will ensure that the right types of development are permitted in the right locations, and will identify the community



facilities and infrastructure required to support this growth. The Local Plan will be prepared in consultation with our community.

It is important that we fully understand the nature of our changing population, including the particular needs of new or smaller communities. This will involve obtaining and using data effectively.

Within the context of this range of ongoing work, it is proposed that the Partnership focus on the following collaborative action projects for the life of this Community Plan:

- ➔ Developing a new Local Plan to manage future levels of growth and development. This will include working to understand the need for future infrastructure, such as school places, GP surgeries, green spaces, transport connections, and community facilities amongst others.

- ➔ Reviewing the Partnership's approach to cohesion, including for new and smaller communities, for example the Somali community. This will also have an intergenerational dimension.
- ➔ Incorporating within regeneration – including at Whitechapel – projects which bridge communities and promote cohesion.
- ➔ Understanding our changing communities, including through a renewed partnership approach to data use.

**To measure progress towards responding to population growth we will develop a set of outcome measures relating to the above activity.**

## Enablers

In addition, there are some different ways of working which will enable partners to have a greater impact on these proposed priority areas. Partners will work together to understand and respond to financial interdependencies across the partnership. This is crucial as there is increasing pressure on all public sector organisations to reduce costs and do more with less. There is still much potential to explore sharing of services and assets across the partnership. This could mean sharing buildings or services or people. We want to make sure local services are more integrated, reducing inefficiencies and making it much easier for residents to navigate between services. Key to this will be understanding population growth and the impact it is having on our communities and the new communities being created, as well as our ability to deliver services.

# One Tower Hamlets

The One Tower Hamlets vision has underpinned our Community Plan and our Partnership for the last seven years. The vision is to reduce inequality, promote community cohesion and enable community engagement and leadership by giving people the tools and support to improve their lives.

The One Tower Hamlets vision is of a borough where everyone has an equal stake and status; where people have the same opportunities as their neighbours; and where people have a commitment and a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of their communities. Tower Hamlets is a place of immense opportunity, but poverty and inequality can stop local people achieving their full potential.

Existing plans and strategies seek to ensure that we tackle this inequality in all we do. Partner organisations are making the promotion of equality an integral factor in the design and delivery of their services, alongside dedicated initiatives to directly address inequality due to age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion and belief.

One Tower Hamlets also means bringing different parts of the community together, encouraging positive relationships and tackling divisions between communities. 78% of residents agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together, and we have worked with people from across the borough's diverse communities in a unified response to those who seek to divide us. For example, in response to an EDL demonstration, partners supported and took part in a very successful solidarity march, including community and faith leaders, young people, residents, the Police, the council and other local organisations.

A third element of our approach has been focused on providing strong leadership, involving people and giving them the tools and support to improve their lives. The number of people who believe that they can influence decisions affecting their local area is increasing, and Community Champion Coordinators play a vital role in supporting local communities. The Fairness Commission brought together people from a wide range of sectors including big business, public services and small community groups to come up with ideas on making Tower Hamlets a fairer place, which we are now implementing.

These principles remain at the heart of the way in which we will seek to deliver the Community Plan priorities. In particular we will drive this through:

- ➔ A focus on fairness and ensuring that no community is left behind which is key to maintaining cohesion across the borough
- ➔ A focus on empowerment and resilience that will ensure that communities are engaged and capacity is built for community leadership
- ➔ A focus on healthy living and employment that will enable us to tackle some of the key barriers to equality, and to focus particularly on more disadvantaged parts of the community.

Making One Tower Hamlets a reality will also mean redoubling our efforts to inform and engage local people and make every voice count. This will include looking again at the structures of the Partnership which communicate with and engage people at a neighbourhood and ward level.

# Delivering the priorities

We are in the process of developing plans to implement the new cross-cutting priorities agreed by partners, and these will be published once complete. In the meantime, work to deliver our existing commitments will continue through our Community Plan Delivery Groups.

