

Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015

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Foreword

This Community Plan sets out a partnership vision for Tower Hamlets. In it we outline where and how, as a partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations we will work together with residents to achieve that vision. I want to see a Tower Hamlets that we can all be proud of, a borough with the best schools, the best houses, the cleanest streets. A place where residents can live active, healthy and fulfilling lives, a place people want to visit, a centre of business opportunity, and most importantly a place everyone can call home.

The council and its partners have invested significant time, energy and resources in improving educational opportunities, in ensuring many more residents have someone affordable and decent to live and ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our community are safe and supported. We now need to build on that, empower and enable residents to fulfil their potential and their aspirations. I want to see the young people of Tower Hamlets competing nationally and globally for the opportunities they deserve. I want to ensure that residents have more of a say in the way local services are designed and delivered, and that local families continue to thrive, resilient to any challenges that come their way.

Key to this is ensuring the people of Tower Hamlets are at the centre of economic growth and opportunities, particularly as the centre of London continues to shift east. I want to see investment in the borough, job creation, growth of local businesses and infrastructure, harnessing those opportunities for local residents. We must ensure that the most vulnerable in our community are not left behind, those on low incomes, with disabilities or those who are elderly. That they too can thrive and fulfil their aspirations.

None of this is achievable without everyone in Tower Hamlets working together. As a partnership we are strong, ambitious and forward-thinking. We must pursue that ambition, with the interests of local residents at the heart of everything we do.

Lutfur Rahman
Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Introduction

About Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is a fast paced, fast growing and changing borough. Its economy is thriving, more homes are being built here than anywhere else in the country, more and more people want to live here and large-scale and ambitious regeneration and infrastructure projects continue to breathe new life and bring fresh opportunities into key areas of the borough. 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. 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 the borough.

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 are:

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

The only change is from 'a prosperous community' to 'a *fair* and prosperous community'. All partners wanted to reflect the contribution of the Fairness Commission to the debate about economic growth and in Tower Hamlets, 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 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. To then build on and complement this work, this plan sets out a new set of cross-cutting partnership priorities. Using this plan, partners will work together to harness the efforts of all partners and accelerate progress in 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

More homes, better homes

Over 20,000 new homes were built in Tower Hamlets by the council and its housing provider partners between 2004 and 2013, of which 8000 were affordable. Tower Hamlets is consistently one of the top performing London boroughs for delivery of affordable homes. Our targets for new homes, as set out in the London Plan, are the highest in London - almost 4000 per year. This represents one tenth of the target for the whole of London. Over the next 10 years that equates to almost 40,000 new homes and over 100,000 more residents.

Almost 40% of households live in social rented accommodation. Within this sector, the number of non-decent homes is falling – by April 2015 the proportion will be down to 22%. Ensuring new homes are of the highest standards of energy efficiency is a local priority. Tower Hamlets has recently received an award for having the highest number of sustainable homes of any local area. In 2012 Tower Hamlets Energy Community Power was launched, giving residents advice and information about saving money by switching energy supplier.

The partnership is also meeting its targets for the number of new affordable homes which are family sized, supporting our efforts to reduce overcrowding. 4800 overcrowded families have been re-housed in the last 4 years.

Thriving community spaces

Local partners have made significant strides in reshaping and regenerating local areas. Through the Local Plan and our award-winning Core Strategy, the borough has clear spatial planning and development management policies which successfully guide and manage development in the borough. The Ocean Estate is now substantially renewed, with many new homes and improvements to existing homes. The next phase of regeneration will begin in April 2015. Similar plans are underway at Blackwall Reach, in Bromley-by-Bow and Poplar. We now have a masterplan for Whitechapel which we hope to realise by 2025, awarded a silver medal at the 2014 National Planning Awards. The masterplan is designed to harness the economic benefits of the arrival of Crossrail in 2017, as aims to deliver new open spaces and squares, a destination shopping centre, a civic hub and new jobs at Med City, as well as many new homes. We will shortly be developing plans for the transformation of South Quay. 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.

The Community Infrastructure Levy for Tower Hamlets is a new tax on development that will, for the most part, replace Section 106. The charging schedule, a document which sets the rates for CIL, went to an independent examination earlier this year and officers are now reviewing the decision and will publish this soon.

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 Green Flag Award, the Government's scheme to recognise the country's best green spaces and parks. 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 streets of Tower Hamlets are cleaner than in previous years, with significant reductions in litter, graffiti and fly-posting. Recycling rates in Tower Hamlets are higher than ever, continuing to rise each year and outperforming similar boroughs. An 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, enabling them to contribute to keeping the borough clean and green.

There is high demand for community spaces and facilities. The borough's Idea Stores and libraries have over 2 million visits a year, and Idea Store Whitechapel is the busiest in central London. They 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 the first 10 months.

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% in between the 2001 and 2011 Census. This growth has continued, with the population rising from 254,000 in 2011 to 272,000 in 2013. This is 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 60%, rising to 428,000. Around 107,000 commuters head to work in Canary Wharf each day. Major tourist attractions like the Tower of London draw in over 4 million visitors each year.

There is concern from residents about the very visible impact of population growth, about the large numbers of high value homes being built, pushing forward gentrification and the negative impact that can have on existing communities. They worry about high-rise developments of luxury apartments, emphasising the disconnect between new, wealthier residents and lower-income communities. They want everyone to benefit from economic growth, not feel pushed out. Managing the impact of population growth, particularly community tensions this could give rise to, is a significant challenge for the borough.

Housing pressures

Nowhere is the concern about population growth more acute than in housing. London as a whole has seen unprecedented increases in house prices and rents, driven by significant overseas investment, with market rates now bearing little relation to the income of most residents, as highlighted by the Fairness Commission. Ensuring enough affordable homes for residents is one of the biggest challenges the borough faces. 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, making rising to this challenge all the harder.

There is enormous pressure on social housing – there are currently over 20,000 families on the housing waiting list. In particular there is a shortage of suitable family housing and we know that this then means there is a disproportionate impact on BME and Muslim families. There are also shortages in the number of wheelchair accessible homes for disabled people on the housing register.

We know homelessness is rising and it's getting harder to prevent, and rehouse people, given the pressures of population growth and the shortage of affordable homes available in the private sector as well as reform of the welfare system which is reducing and capping benefits.

One of the biggest housing issues in Tower Hamlets continues to be overcrowding – 16% of households have too few bedrooms, rising to 22% in the social rented sector. The council continues to re-house overcrowded families, with a target of rehousing 1000 families every year and overcrowded households given high priority on the housing waiting list. Unfortunately, a reduction in the number of affordable properties available to let and benefit changes, is making this effort harder.

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 number of privately rented properties has on estates and communities, as well as high rents. The council has therefore committed to pursuing a landlord registry scheme for Tower Hamlets with the aim of improving the quality of accommodation and having more influence over landlords in this sector.

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

Despite reductions in litter, graffiti and fly-tipping, public satisfaction with the cleanliness of the local environment is not as high as we would like. We need to understand and address the reasons for that. Furthermore, recycling rates are still below the London average and we know there is more we can do to enable residents to recycle more.

We know that having quality community facilities, 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. Population growth puts ever increasing pressure on these community resources, whilst public sector funding cuts make it harder than ever to

maintain and invest them. The council and its partners must find ever more innovative ways to utilise spaces and generate revenue and investment in local services and facilities.

Current partnership priorities

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.

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
- Relocate the town hall to the Old Royal London Hospital building in Whitechapel
- Continue the regeneration of Poplar including a projects at Poplar Baths, Chrisp Street, Burdett, Aberfeldy and Bow Bridge
- Develop a Masterplan for South Quay
- Continued 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 and a new arts centre
- 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

A thriving economy

Tower Hamlets has one of the most dynamic economies in the country, driven mostly by financial and business services. In coming years, regeneration programmes in Poplar, Bromley-by-Bow, Wood Wharf, Blackwall Reach and Whitechapel will contribute to that growth and by 2030 there will likely be 337,000 jobs in the borough, an increase of around 100,000 from current levels. There are over 11,000 businesses registered in Tower Hamlets. Whilst most local businesses are small or even micro businesses, employing less than 10 staff, Canary Wharf has a concentration of very large companies employing over 500 people.

The employment rate is improving and 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, as is the rate of child poverty which has fallen significantly in the last 4 years.

Educational success

Tower Hamlets continues to experience significant improvements in education attainment and the borough's schools are amongst the best urban school 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% having a degree level qualification, above the London average. Furthermore, local partners have worked successfully in recent years to reduce the number of 16-18 years olds who are not in education, employment or training.

We know that changes to Government financial support for students is making it harder for students to stay in education and so Tower Hamlets has introduced Education Awards for post-16 students and Higher Education Awards to help students with the costs of university.

A commitment to fairness

In 2012 the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission was launched, bringing together a group of local community leaders and external thinkers, all independent of the council and statutory partners. They engaged residents, local stakeholders, businesses and a broad range of regional and national experts in a debate about life in Tower Hamlets in a context of fast-paced growth, economic inequality and increasing austerity. They made a series of challenging recommendations aimed at promoting more fairness and equality in employment, housing and money, now fully embedded within the partnership business

planning processes. One year on from the publication of their report, Commissioners were proud and impressed by progress made in implementing the recommendations.

The challenges we face

High and persistent unemployment

Despite the buoyant economy and a rising unemployment 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.

Continuing to narrow the gap in educational attainment

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. 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.

Many residents feeling left behind

Feedback from the community and voluntary sector shows that far from feeling prosperous, many local people are concerned about the cost of living and making ends meet. Tower Hamlets is the third most deprived area in the country and despite decreasing significantly levels of child poverty 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 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.

Such deprivation juxtaposed with the growth and wealth described above illustrates the significant inequalities which characterise Tower Hamlets, a microcosm of the growing inequalities between rich and poor across the UK. The Fairness Commission explored the determinants and impacts of this inequality extensively and its recommendations sought to address it, focusing on inequalities in all things 'money' related – income, costs of living and financial inclusion as well as employment opportunities and housing.

The Fairness Commission was particularly concerned with the so-called 'poverty premium', the additional costs of living faced by families because they are on a low income. This

concept was introduced by Save the Children some years ago and expanded more recently by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who found that people on low incomes are less likely to be active consumers, because they lack 'enabling goods' such as internet access and bank accounts. Promoting digital and financial inclusion is therefore an essential aspect of reducing costs of living, and these are strong and growing areas of partnership working in Tower Hamlets.

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 their impact on local people, as well as supporting residents through them. 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 bedroom tax. Locally commissioned research estimates that by 2015 the cumulative impact of all welfare reforms will mean that households claiming benefits will be £1670 per year, or £32 per week, worse off. These impacts will affect over 40,000 households, over half will be households where someone is in work.

Next on the horizon are the introduction of Universal Credit and the transition from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments. Improving digital and financial inclusion are issues particularly relevant to these changes, as benefit claims become digital 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 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

Inequality between the thriving businesses based in the borough and the people who work there, and many local residents is stark and feels unfair. Local people want to see businesses making more effort to connect and contribute to their local community, whether creating training and employment opportunities, linking with schools and young people or through more traditional philanthropic activity.

The Fairness Commission picked up on these concerns and advocated for much stronger links between locally-based businesses and Tower Hamlets residents, through employment opportunities, work experience for young people 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 healthy high streets

Healthy 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. Concerns are often raised by residents and businesses alike about empty shops, the availability of quality and healthy food, and the balance of outlets ensuring there are products and services which meet the needs and expectations of broad range of residents. Many residents are also concerned about the proliferation of gambling outlets, fast food takeaways and payday lenders on local high streets. Until recently local authorities had very little power to prevent these. We know that a strong partnership approach is required to say what a ‘healthy high street’ means in Tower Hamlets and to work together to achieve that.

Current partnership priorities

Partnership priorities and activities in pursuit of a prosperous community are captured by the Enterprise and Employment Strategies, the work of 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
- Ambitious targets for expansion of 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
- Support to enable disabled residents and those with physical and mental health conditions to work
- Becoming 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 Financial Inclusive Tower Hamlets Partnership
- Continue to help residents reduce their energy bills with the Tower Hamlets Energy Co-op
- 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 new a new Business Charter, encouraging businesses to ‘employ local, supply local and support local’

- Support start-up enterprise by developing low-cost work space and creating business start up grants.
- Aim of 50% of all council contracts with local businesses
- Encourage more businesses to pay the London Living Wage
- Develop a healthy high streets strategy

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

- VCS shaping strategy and services and co-producing local services
- VCS resilience and financial sustainability
- Monitoring, evaluating and demonstrating impact

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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

Falling crime rates overall

Overall, crime rates in Tower Hamlets have fallen over the last decade, total notifiable offences have fallen from a peak of 41,100 in 2002/3 to 27,000 in 2013/14. This is even more significant when you consider the population growth in that time. Although still worse than the London average, crime rates in Tower Hamlets are better than some of neighbouring boroughs. Personal robbery and residential burglary in particular have reduced.

A strong sense of community cohesion

81% of residents, more people than ever, think that people from different backgrounds get on well together, showing there is a strong sense of community cohesion. This has risen from 69% in 2009. Tower Hamlets Partnership has a well-developed and responsive approach to community cohesion and tension, recognised by external bodies. The borough has therefore managed effectively attempts to divide our communities including a campaign of homophobic stickering and a protest by members of the English Defence League. This work is complemented by a successful Prevent Programme, led by the council in collaboration with a number of local partners.

Schools play an important role in fostering community cohesion, working with students, their parents and the wider community to promote tolerance and empathy between different groups, so they understand and respond positively to the pressures of today's society and reject all forms of unacceptable influence. Schools also support young people to secure the high aspirations they have for their futures so they can make a meaningful contribution to local, national and international relationships.

Key to promoting community cohesion is the borough's work to promote equality. Tower Hamlets is recognised as an exemplar of equality practice: the council was recently assessed as Excellent against the LGA Equality Framework for Local Government and continues to be recognised as a Stonewall Top 100 Employer, as is Tower Hamlets Homes.

The challenges we face

Addressing fear of crime

Understanding and addressing public concern about crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as continuing to reduce actual levels, is a priority for the partnership and remains one of our biggest challenges. Over the last few years public concern about crime has fallen considerable, but remains a top personal concern of residents, and community concern about drunken behaviour and drug use has risen slightly. 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 particularly geographical areas of Tower Hamlets who are responsible for a significant amount of youth violence and drug dealing. We know that the presence of these gangs effects fears about community safety of 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, although this may be due to an increase in reported incidents. Either way, it 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 Police officers and other staff.

Over the last few years, concerns about cyclists' safety has risen, due to a number of fatalities on the busy arterial roads through the borough.

Current partnership priorities

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

- increasing the number of THEOs and creating 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

- Tackle gangs and serious youth violence

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

- increasing investment in victim support and encouraging reporting

Promote community cohesion

- Establish an 'Every Voice Matters' strategy
- 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.

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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

Improvements in some areas of healthy living

Efforts to make the Tower Hamlets population healthier have had some successes with significantly reduced teenage pregnancy rates and levels of childhood obesity falling slightly. More than 11,000 residents have been supported to stop smoking over the last 4 years. Tower Hamlets has some of the highest rates of childhood immunisations in the country. Life expectancy has increased over the last 10 years, as a result of effective investment of partner resources.

There have also been improvements in the social and environmental factors which affect health, due in part to the efforts of the partnership to promote healthy lives. For example, increasing and improving green spaces, increasingly the availability of healthy food, reducing the availability of counterfeit tobacco, alcohol and drugs, widening access to sexual health services and ensuring that people are informed and empowered to lead healthy lives.

The partnership is committed to promoting good mental health and wellbeing, with a separate strategy setting out how partners will work together to improve outcomes. The Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board was the first in the UK to sign the Time to Change Pledge as a partnership.

A national pioneer in the integration of health and social care

Tower Hamlets, as part of an integrated care programme for north east London, has been given pioneer status by the Department of Health. This is recognition of our leadership in transforming the way health and care services are delivered. Through the Better Care Fund, 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, thereby reducing reliance on hospital services and emergency admissions.

The programme partnership is made of the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest, the three borough Clinical Commissioning Groups, Barts Health NHS Trust, East London NHS Foundation Trust, North East London NHS Foundation Trust and University College London Partners. These are some of the

Improving services

Tower Hamlets continues to deliver high quality and award-winning health and social care services. NHS Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group has been recognised by Britain's leading and most prestigious health sector awards for the excellent work it is

doing as a CCG and in improving care through technology. The borough's new dementia care pathways won a Municipal Journal Health and Social Care Award.

Local surveys show that the quality of life for users of adult social care services is improving, and more residents are having more control over their package of support. Tower Hamlets remains the only area in the country to provide free, non-means tested, homecare.

Local children's social care services are working well, both safeguarding and Looked After Children were rated good by Ofsted and the time between a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family relatively low. The governance of local safeguarding arrangements for children's and adults are reviewed regularly and found to be robust, and in line with Working Together 2013. The Family Wellbeing Model has been recently reviewed and updated to reflect new guidance and working practices.

The challenges we face

Persistent health inequalities

Reducing the inequalities in health and wellbeing experienced by so many Tower Hamlets 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, TB and sexually transmitted infections.

Ensuring good mental health and wellbeing

Good mental health and wellbeing is fundamental to quality of life. At least 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life. Characteristics of Tower Hamlets, such as low incomes, inequality, low employment and less access to green space, mean more people here are at risk of poor mental health compared with other areas. We already have higher hospital admission rates for adults with a mental illness and the number of people with dementia is projected to increase significantly in the coming years, in line with the ageing population.

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 compared to London. This is not surprising given the correlation between low 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.

Older people in Tower Hamlets are not very healthy. 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 3 'comorbid' conditions. 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.

High numbers of carers

The 2011 Census identified that 7.6% of residents provide unpaid care to a family member, neighbour or friend. 3% of carers are young, 29% are aged 50 and over, 9% are aged 65 and over. 43% of carers provide more than 20 hours a week, and a quarter provide over 50 hours a week, many more than London and England averages.

The Care Act will increase 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. 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 continued move towards integration between health and social care services. Whilst all of these can create opportunities, they also present 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 priorities:

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.

Ensuring a healthy start for every child

- Promoting maternal health and people's experiences of maternity services
- Reducing infant mortality and promoting infant health
- Ensuring that all children are physically, emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively ready for school

Empowering people to live healthy lives together

- Tackling obesity and promoting physical activity
- Reducing the prevalence of tobacco use and substance misuse
- Promote good sexual health

Promoting good mental health and wellbeing

- Building resilience, mental health and wellbeing for all
- High quality treatment and support
- Living 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

Influencing 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.

What we've heard

The Community Plan consultation has done much to generate debate, raise awareness and develop local partnerships. During the course of this consultation every section of Tower Hamlets' community was targeted through large workshops, service user forums, community ward meetings and resident engagement events hosted in markets throughout the borough. Local people of all ages and backgrounds came together to talk to senior managers and council officers about the issues that matter to them.

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 unsuitable and therefore beyond the reach of people who want to live in Tower Hamlets. Suitable housing options that meets the needs of the most vulnerable such as people with learning disabilities, mental health problems or are housebound is also a specific challenge. Added to this, are existing issues such as drugs misuse and anti-social behaviour which can blight individual and community life on estates, and highlights how good housing and good living conditions is fundamental to wellbeing and cohesion. Residents want the partnership to secure the continued existence of mixed communities through brokering a range of affordable housing choices that reflects 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.

Equality of opportunity and when managing austerity

There is concern amongst local communities over how funding given by the council is not balanced equally across groups. Residents feel that this imbalance becomes all the more significant when attempting to address the negative impacts of population growth within the borough. Local people feel that increased transparency in decisions over public savings should be a crucial aspect of the council's commitment to fairness. Residents are unanimous that the council should recognise the time and effort of people that support the council to save money such as carers and volunteers when considering service delivery, and therefore should help empower and enable these individuals to continue making a difference to people's lives. 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 inherent problems amongst some communities who are wary of the authorities, such as addressing the stigma associated with domestic violence.

Residents want the partnership to be mindful of the costs of living which are rising rapidly and prompting 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 realise that employment is important but that there are practical barriers that need to be overcome. They want as much support as possible to help them secure sustainable employment, and address gaps in knowledge around how to access jobs, soft skills and networks especially since it 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 believe that the creative sector may prove more lucrative for local people seeking employment than trying to access financial services jobs. There is also concern that low aspirations amongst 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. A lack of childcare provision, specifically affordable childcare to enable parents to work is a pressing concern for local residents. Residents want new and alternative models of childcare and existing spaces within the borough to be turned into facilities.

There is growing anxiety amongst residents 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 and paid to residents to ensure a fairer society. Residents care about financial literacy as this is important to help households out of debt and into saving through the provision of expert advice to solve deep-seated financial or housing problems.

Cleaner, greener Tower Hamlets

The value of the borough's public realm means many different things to different people but essentially it is the space in which public life takes place. 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 speeding on residential streets which pose a threat to safety.

Working better together

Partnership priorities for 2015 onwards

So far, this plan has set out our achievements, current challenges and 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 that 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 and 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 don't fit neatly into one of the four community themes and at new challenges or ones 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 this criteria and developed a set of high level and cross-cutting priorities which will be the focus of the Partnership Executive 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. Four such priorities were agreed and these are set out below.

There are some different ways of working which will enable partners to have a greater impact on these priorities. 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 much potential still 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.

Priority 1:

Empowering residents and building the resilience of our communities

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 we can do with the resources we have. We recognise that the nature of some services means that people become too dependent on them, which is not good for that person 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 could be through more co-production of services, about 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.

An important way which we know could build the resilience of our communities is with a partnership wide focus on early intervention and prevention. Working with children, young people and their families to understand and improve their wellbeing, before they reach crisis point. This could be in all aspects of their life – in education, health, financial wellbeing or housing.

A crucial first step to better empowering residents is communicating with them. As a partnership we can and should do more so residents understand what help is available and where, how they can get involved in service delivery.

Priority 2:

Reducing persistent health inequalities and their impact

Tower Hamlets has seen significant progress in education, reducing child poverty and increasing the skills and employability of residents. However, health inequalities remain high and persistent and have a real impact on the life chances of our residents. We know there are high levels of many lifestyle risk factors locally, such as smoking, obesity, unemployment and poor housing. By making this a partnership priority we would aim to develop a borough-wide focus on healthy living, moving this agenda beyond health agencies, with everyone considering their role and seeking to improve health through everything that we do.

Priority 3:

Harnessing all partnership resources to increase 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 lots 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. For example we could engage more local employers through our networks and supply chains, bring a stronger employment focus to regeneration, development and housing activities, or build employment activities into healthcare pathways and in particular into recovery from mental ill health, as well as continuing to embed employment skills and careers guidance into work with young people and their families in schools. There are a large number of Tower Hamlets residents who 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.

Partners can play a significant role in increasing employment through their activities including their own recruitment and employment practices, but the partnership must 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.

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, there number will increase over the coming years, particularly the number of residents aged 85 and older. Tower Hamlets has long been a very diverse borough and is currently the 16th most diverse local authority in the country, with 43% of residents born outside the UK, 90 languages spoken by residents 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 homes, but at the same time puts enormous pressures on affordable housing. As partners we need to ensure there are enough school places and health facilities, that people can move around the borough safely, and that open spaces, the environment and air quality are protected. 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 service and managing demand, working together to ensure effective use of limited resources.

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One Tower Hamlets

Why we developed One Tower Hamlets – what the vision was.

Have gone a long way to achieving much of that, but always more to do.

The themes and priorities of this plan continue to fit with the vision of One Tower Hamlets

- A focus on fairness and ensuring that no community is left behind, is key to maintaining cohesion across the borough.
- A focus on empowerment and resilience, on communicating with residents, will ensure that communities are engaged and capacity is built for community leadership.
- A focus on health inequalities and employment will enable us to tackle some of the key barriers to equality.

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