

Tower Hamlets

Children and Families Plan

2016-19

DRAFT

Forewords (to be added)

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan, setting out how local services will support children and families in Tower Hamlets over the next three years.

There are an estimated 69,000 children and young people aged 0 to 19 living in the borough. Tower Hamlets is a “young” borough, with a quarter of the whole population aged 0 to 19 years old. It is a growing borough, having experienced the fastest growing population in the country in recent years, growing almost 30% between the 2001 and 2011 Census. It is also a diverse borough, with 73 per cent of pupils having English as an additional language.

Significant progress has been made in a number of key areas since the last Children and Families Plan was produced. The number of children living in poverty has gone down, education results have gone up and more of our young people are in education, training or employment.

However, we know that many families face significant challenges. Financial hardship is an issue we know continues to affect a number of families, and we recognise that the costs of housing and

childcare are important issues in the borough. Health issues affect a number of children and families. Obesity and tooth decay levels are higher than the national average, and are linked to the access families have to affordable, healthy food. A small number of children in the borough face very significant challenges due to being harmed or exploited. In the last three years, emerging national and local issues include child sexual exploitation and the radicalisation of young people.

This Children and Families Plan seeks to continue good work where things are going well, and to tackle persistent or emerging problems. We have looked at where the protection of children's rights need to be strengthened and where they can be further promoted, recognising that child rights provides a clear framework for the lives of children and families and the role of services within this. At the same time, many public services are anticipating a likely increase in future demand in a climate of restricted resources. This Plan therefore also puts an emphasis on early and holistic help, in recognition of the need to ensure resources are used in the best possible way.

Carrying out the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan

The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan has been developed by the Children and Families Partnership. This partnership is made up a range of local agencies and other representatives, including:

- Barts Health NHS Trust
- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- GPs
- Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Metropolitan Police
- Registered Housing Providers
- Schools
- Tower Hamlets College
- The third and voluntary sector

The Plan is a partnership document. Different organisations will continue to have their own plans setting out how their core responsibilities will be met, however this Children and Families Plan states our collective vision for children and families in the borough. The Plan brings together priorities that require input from a range of services and organisations, as well as from children and families themselves.

The structure of the Plan

The Plan is broken into four main sections. The title of each section has been drawn from "The Charter of Child Rights in Tower Hamlets", reflecting our commitment to the rights of children and young people:

- The first section is "reaching potential". This focuses on education and employment.
- The second section is called "living well". This focuses on life, survival and development.
- The third section is called "playing a part and freedoms". This section focuses on civic rights and responsibilities.
- The fourth section is called "free from harm". This section focuses on protection from abuse and harm.

Each of these sections sets out our “vision” for children and families in Tower Hamlets, and a description of the current situation for children and families in Tower Hamlets. This is followed by a core set of priorities for children and families, and a list of actions setting out how that priority will be achieved. Each priority has an assigned “group” who will work in partnership with others to carry out activities and ensure the priority is met. Finally, each section has a list of key information that we will collect and review to be able to measure our progress against the vision and each of the priorities.

We recognise that the term “young person” is often more appropriate to use in reference to older children. This Plan uses the term “young person” when highlighting an issue specific to older children. However, for ease of use, the Plan uses the broader term of “children” when referencing an issue that affects all children and young people aged 0 to 18. There are, however, some areas where this Plan reflects the specific duties we have to supporting young adults up to the age of 25.

Links to other strategies

The Children and Families Plan does not exist in isolation: Rather, it is part of a series of key strategies in the borough which set out how local services will support and improve the lives of local residents. Sitting above this collection of strategic plans is the over-arching 2015 Tower Hamlets Community Plan. The Community Plan is based around four key themes:

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

In addition, the Community Plan contains four cross-cutting priorities:

- Empowering residents and building resilience
- Promoting healthier lives
- Increasing employment
- Responding to population growth

This Children and Families Plan sets out how we envisage the aims of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan being met for children and families over the next three years: The priorities and actions within this Plan align with the themes and priorities of the Community Plan.

A full list of strategies that are most closely linked to the Children and Families Plan is set out in Appendix I. Key among these is the borough’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy: The 2016-19 Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out how local services will work together in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents over the next three years. The Strategy looks at health and wellbeing in a holistic sense, recognising the importance of enabling and engaging communities and their assets, as well as providing services in response to need. The Children and Families Plan has been developed in tandem with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring that the two strategies collectively move us closer to the ambitions of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan.

How we developed the Plan

Looking at the needs of children and families

An assessment looking at the needs of children and families in Tower Hamlets has driven the content of this Plan. The assessment was carried out in 2015, and looked at where things are going well for children and families and where improvements may be needed. To carry out this assessment, we looked at what issues are affecting children and families at both a national and local level. We gathered a range of evidence, facts and figures in order to do this. We heard the views of a number of children and young people and staff who work with them in order to find out where they felt things are going well and where further support may be needed. Overall, the findings of the assessment we carried out has formed the basis of this Plan. A summary of what we found out is included at the beginning of each section.

Looking at the rights of children and young people

We used an innovative “child rights-based approach” to develop this Children and Families Plan, in partnership with Unicef.

What are child rights?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child’s life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. Overall, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child acts as a set of internationally agreed legal standards which lay out a vision of childhood underpinned by dignity, equality, safety and participation.

“The Convention changed the way children are viewed and treated – in other words, as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of passive objects of care and charity. These rights describe what a child needs to survive, grow, and live up to their potential in the world”

Child rights have informed this Plan in the following ways:

Firstly, we used “The Charter of Child Rights in Tower Hamlets” to structure this Children and Families Plan. This Charter was drawn up in partnership with children and families in the borough in 2013: It sets out the child rights that children and young people in Tower Hamlets feel are most relevant to them. These rights are grouped under the headings “reaching potential”, “living well”, “playing a part and freedoms” and “free from harm”. These headings, in turn, have been used as the main four sections of this Children and Families Plan.

Secondly, relevant articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have been allocated to each section of the Plan. They have provided context for each section, allowing us to see where the rights of children are being protected and promoted and where further work may be needed.

Thirdly, seven child rights principles have provided the analysis framework for the needs assessment. These principles have been developed by Unicef to act as a framework to consider when putting rights into practice within public services. These are: Dignity; participation; life, survival and development; non-discrimination; transparency and accountability; best interest; and

interdependence and indivisibility. These principles have not been made explicit in the Plan, but have nonetheless provided the main analytical framework for the findings.

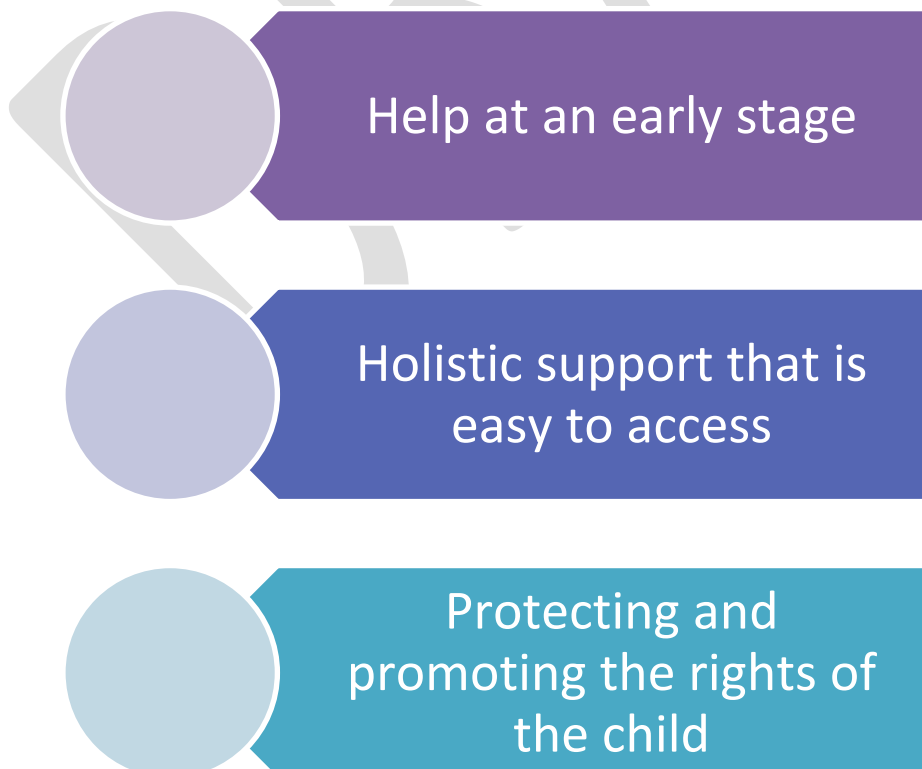
Hearing your views and experiences

Almost 100 children, young people and adults told us their views on the issues affecting children and families in Tower Hamlets, as did a large number of staff from a wide range of organisations. This feedback has driven and shaped both the needs assessment and the final 2016-19 Children and Families Plan. Some of the key messages we heard from children and families included:

- The importance of professionals treating each child or young person as an individual.
- Active play and socialising is beneficial to children and families and should be protected and promoted
- Housing was highlighted by many as a problem facing a number of families, and one that can affect all other areas of life
- Whilst most younger and older children feel safe, older children cited a number of areas where young people are at risk of harm from others or themselves. Feedback was that a number of people have a fear or mistrust of some services
- Parents can need support in their parenting role, and should be encouraged to engage in activities that are relevant to their children's lives
- Mental and emotional wellbeing needs to be considered in all services.

Cross-cutting priorities

Overall, we want to continue the trend where things are going well for children and families in Tower Hamlets, and to continue to tackle any problems. To do this, this Plan has three cross-cutting priorities:



Help at an early stage

Evidence is clear that the early years of a child's life are crucial to their life, survival and development: As a result, this Plan has a focus on actions that support children at the beginning of their lives. Help at an early stage means getting the right support at the right time. Families and staff have stressed the importance of this, highlighting that support at an early stage can help ensure that any issues are addressed quickly, preventing further escalation or crises and ensuring resources are put to the best possible use. This Plan therefore includes a range of actions aimed at promoting wellbeing, prevention and supporting children and families at an early stage.

Holistic support that is easy to access

Holistic support recognises that a problem or solution cannot be looked at in isolation. The lives of children and families are impacted by a huge range of factors including health, housing, education, employment and relationships. This Plan recognises that these factors are interlinked, and includes a focus on ensuring that support services address these interdependencies in their work. Children and families have also made it clear that it is vital that support is easy to access. The structure of support services can often appear complex to residents, so this Plan includes a number of actions aimed at improving how services work together and helping children and families to understand and access the support they need.

Protecting and promoting the rights of the child

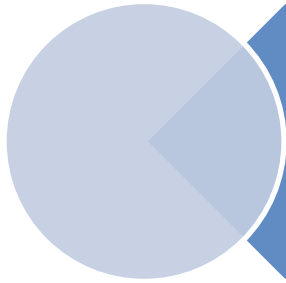
The rights of children are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provide a holistic set of standards that children and young people can expect from adults and from government. The priorities and actions in this Plan have been driven by an assessment of what local services in Tower Hamlets can do to further promote or protect the rights of the child to ensure these standards are being met.

We recognise that "transitions" is another important area for children and families. This includes the transition to school, the transition between school years and the transition to adulthood and independence. Whilst transitions has not been identified as a cross-cutting priority, it should be noted that the number of the priorities within this plan and the actions to meet them refer implicitly or explicitly to transitioning. The aim of these priorities and actions is to ensure that children and families are supported, so that transitions are smooth and effective.

Section 1: Reaching potential

This section looks at childcare and early education, education and employment. Analysis has been derived from child rights that have an emphasis on education and development. These are:

- Article 28: Right to education
- Article 29: Goals of education
- Article 32: Child labour



Vision: For each child and young person in Tower Hamlets to have the opportunity to develop their personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Reaching potential: The story so far

Children and young people in Tower Hamlets have achieved much success in recent years. For example:

- GCSE achievement has risen, with over 64 per cent of pupils gaining five GCSEs with grades between A* and C in summer 2015, including English and maths. This puts us considerably higher than the national average of under 53 per cent.
- The number of young people who are not in employment, education or training is at its lowest ever figure at 3.4 per cent.
- Children and young people in Tower Hamlets are ambitious. In a recent local survey, more than two-thirds of primary and secondary school pupils said they wanted to go to university.

However, we recognise that there is still work to do to:

- There is a huge range of childcare available to families in the borough, however we know that childcare can be expensive for families and expensive for childcare providers. A number of families on low incomes who are eligible for free childcare for two-year-olds are not using this, and may benefit from doing so.
- Children's Centres in the borough are well thought of by local families in Tower Hamlets. We want to further develop the role of Children's Centres, and to encourage more disadvantaged families to use them.
- Although our children and young people achieve considerable success at school, Key Stage 1 results (for children aged 5 to 7 years old) and A-Level results are the two areas where we are

improving year on year but are below the national average. In addition, our research indicates that education choices for pupils aged over 16 who do not want to take A or AS Levels is not as wide as it could be.

- Children and young people tell us that school work, exams and what to do after Year 11 can be a major source of worry. We want to do more to support children and young people with these concerns.
- Some of our children and young people can experience particular challenges in school. Children who are looked after and children in need of help or protection from social care can face problems, and whilst the average performance of these children is in line with or above national averages for these groups, performance is still below the borough average. Recent research has also identified that performance at school is lower than average for pupils of a white working class British background.
- Young people need the skills that provide them with opportunities in the current labour market.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities get good support to achieve their potential, but we want to improve this further to ensure the right support is provided at an earlier stage.
- Across the UK, the relationship between the local authority and schools is changing as the number of academy schools grows. We need to ensure that children and families continue to receive the best possible education in line with these changes.

Reaching potential: What we will do

This section describes our top four “reaching potential” priorities and what we will do differently over the next three years. Each priority has a set of actions underneath it, setting out how we envisage the priority being met. The group or team of staff responsible for these is also stated. These groups or teams will work in partnership with a range of organisations in the borough and with children and families to ensure the priorities are met.

★ **Priority 1: Give children the best opportunity to reach their potential**


- Continue to develop Children’s Centres as “hubs” for a range of support, including strengthening links with child health services
- Work with disadvantaged and vulnerable children and families to increase their access to Children’s Centres
- Ensure all families are aware of the childcare options available to them
- Review how all families with children of all ages can be supported to find affordable childcare
- Undertake work with parents/carers, nursery and primary schools and other partners to support and improve “school readiness” for Nursery and Reception Years and transitions between the school age phases, including the identification and targeted support of vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- Encourage higher levels of attendance for Reception Year children in primary schools
- Support children through the educational system, including looked after children and newly arrived children
- Provide support to vulnerable children and young people and those that have extra caring responsibilities, e.g. for a parent or relative, so that they can engage in positive activities
- Support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

➔ *The local authority’s Learning and Achievement Senior Management Team and the Children’s Centre Board will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 2: Help more young people reach their full potential**


- Address the unevenness of post-16 provision by carrying out a review and taking appropriate action
- Continue to improve A/AS Level results in the borough
- Continue to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training through early intervention and tailored support
- Improve educational and employment outcomes for care leavers, young offenders and teenage parents through targeted work
- Review and develop the opportunities available to young people to develop skills that will be of benefit in the labour market
- Review and develop advice to families and young people on exams and what to do when they are older, promoting aspirations within this
- Reduce inequalities in education and attainment levels by carrying out research on the reasons behind areas of over or underrepresentation among different groups of children, and by carrying out actions agreed from research into White British working class educational attainment and evaluating this
- Raise awareness amongst children and family service providers of Idea Stores, highlighting their role as learning hubs for children and families

- Support all young people to access enrichment, cultural and social activities. This includes the provision of enjoyable, engaging, positive activities which children and young people can access after school in an informal education setting in order to support their achievement and aspirations

 *The local authority's Learning and Achievement Senior Management Team and the Post-16 Forum will lead on this priority.*

Priority 3: Strengthen partnership working in education

- Work together to implement and evaluate the impact of the 2015 Education and Adoption Bill
- Review the links between the local authority and educational models outside local authority control to see how these links can be strengthened
- Promote the use of person-centred planning to strengthen partnership working between families, education, providers, health services and social care
- Strengthen the link between Idea Stores and other learning and achievement services for children and families

 *The local authority's Learning and Achievement Senior Management Team and Resources Management Team will lead on this priority.*

Priority 4: Ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities get the support they need

- Review how children with special educational needs and their families are supported so that effective support is provided at an early stage
- Improve the experiences of young people with significant special educational needs as they transition into adulthood, so that they have increased employment opportunities, are actively involved in their community, live independently and manage their health better
- Work to improve how children with a disability transition into adulthood and into adult social care where applicable so that holistic support is provided at an early stage

 *The local authority's Learning and Achievement Senior Management Team and a new "task and finish" group will lead on this priority.*

Reaching potential: How will progress be measured?

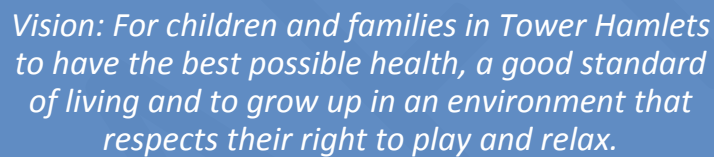
The following are the key indicators we will use to help us measure progress over the next three years:

- "Good" levels of development for very young children
- Key Stage results
- Levels of young people not in employment, education or training
- Number and experience of children with special educational needs
- Feedback from children, families and stakeholders

Section 2: Living Well

This section looks at housing, poverty, healthy food, healthcare and protection and play and leisure time. Analysis has been derived from child rights that have an emphasis on life, survival and development (listed below). We recognise that the wider determinants of health and wellbeing go beyond housing, economic wellbeing and play, however this needs assessment has identified these three topics as key issues to explore as they are explicitly referenced in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Article 6: Life, survival and development
- Article 24: Health and health services
- Article 26: Social security
- Article 27: Adequate standard of living
- Article 31: Leisure, play and culture



Vision: For children and families in Tower Hamlets to have the best possible health, a good standard of living and to grow up in an environment that respects their right to play and relax.

Living well: The story so far

Children and families in Tower Hamlets have experienced improvements in their health, wellbeing and quality of life over many areas. For example:

- While still high, child poverty levels in the borough have fallen from 39 per cent in 2012 to 35 per cent in 2015.
- The number of young children achieving a “good” level of development has improved significantly over recent years.
- Immunisation levels are generally very good in Tower Hamlets, and the childhood immunisation programme in Tower Hamlets has been very successful over the last two years.
- In a recent survey, 75 per cent of primary school pupils and 62 per cent of secondary school pupils said they feel happy about life at the moment¹.
- A programme of work is already underway to improve how care services work together. The “Vanguard” programme in Tower Hamlets aims to develop a new integrated model of care for children, with a focus on prevention, early help and access to high quality “joined up” services.

¹ 2015 Pupil Attitude Survey – provisional results

However, we recognise that there are a number of significant challenges for children and families in this area:

- We know that housing is a key issue for many families in the borough. Living in Tower Hamlets is expensive for many and unaffordable for some. We recognise that this combined with problems over the quality of some local housing has profound implications for families in the borough, and we need to support families with this in every way we can.
- Whilst the situation is improving, a significant number of our children and young people live in poverty. Across the UK, welfare reform is likely to add increased financial pressures for families in receipt of benefits, presenting a key challenge for some families.
- Tackling problems associated with diet and exercise – including obesity and dental health – remains a priority for us going forward. Access to healthy and affordable food is key to the issue, as is ensuring that children and young people are able to play safely and access open spaces.
- We want to do more to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of children and families. Estimates indicate that we have high levels of mental health disorders compared to the England average. Children and families have highlighted a number of areas where they feel emotional support in the borough could be improved.

Living well: What we will do

This section describes our top five “Living Well” priorities and what we will do differently over the next three years. Each priority has a set of actions underneath it, setting out how we envisage the priority being met. The group or team of staff responsible for these is also stated. These groups or teams will work in partnership with a range of organisations in the borough and with children and families to ensure the priorities are met.

★ **Priority 5: Supporting families to be in the best possible position to access stable, affordable and good quality housing**

- Strengthen joint working between housing, health and local authority Children’s Services by ensuring appropriate representation at a strategic level and by ensuring relevant housing strategies include specific actions for children and families. Strategies can include actions to review information available to children and families on housing options to ensure informed choices can be made, and to investigate the experience of families who live in the private rented sector to see how they can be best supported by housing services
- Further develop and improve cross-departmental case-working to deliver the best outcomes for children and families, with an emphasis on preventing homelessness wherever possible
- Investigate the issue of family mobility in the borough and take appropriate action to support children and families as much as possible

➔ *The Health and Housing Sub-Group of the local authority’s Housing Forum and a new “task and finish group” will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 6: Minimise the negative impact of welfare reform and poverty**

- Ensuring that there are specific actions from the Welfare Reform Task Group for children and families, focusing on financial inclusion to support families to maximise their income and support into employment
- Develop appropriate resettlement support for families forced to relocate as a result of welfare reform and/or homelessness in partnership with the Housing Options Service

➔ *The local authority’s Welfare Reform Task Group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 7: Improve the diet, nutrition and physical activity of children and young people**

- Promote healthy weight by building on primary school neighbourhood pathfinder projects, improving the availability of healthier food choices for children and families, strengthening community engagement and wider partnership working
- Promote good oral health through the activity described above and by reviewing oral health services targeted at children and families
- Developing a new Play Strategy in order to promote physical activity and the use of open space including adventure playgrounds, to improve Vitamin D levels and ensure children and young people are able to play and socialise. A Play Strategy will also aim to combat negative stereotypes of young people that can deter them from accessing public spaces

➔ *Public health and the Health and Wellbeing Board will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 8: Promote emotional health and wellbeing**

- Strengthen mental health promotion and early support, including support for parents during the early years
- Review and improve information and advice provided to families and young people in relation to sex, relationships and handling feelings
- Review and improve information provided to families on mental health services and systems
- Improve the focus and impact of services on good mental health outcomes through the delivery of the Mental Health Strategy and Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Carry out further analysis on the needs and experiences of newly arrived families, and taking appropriate action to ensure they receive appropriate support

➔ *The Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy Group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 9: Reduce preventable illness and injury**

- Implement a range of self-management initiatives to support children, young people and their families to better manage minor ailments and long term conditions and improve appropriate use of GP and primary care services by families worried about their children's health and wellbeing to reduce unnecessary Accident and Emergency attendance
- Improve care pathways for common conditions amongst children and young people, including asthma, eczema and constipation
- Ensure communities and services recognise and respond appropriately to acute serious illness requiring urgent response (e.g. asthma attacks, high fever, risk of diabetic coma etc.) through awareness raising and targeted staff training
- Increase protection against vaccine preventable disease by continuing to monitor and improve on immunisation coverage

➔ *The Clinical Commissioning Group Children Young People Programme Board (including public health) will lead on this priority.*

Living well: How will progress be measured?

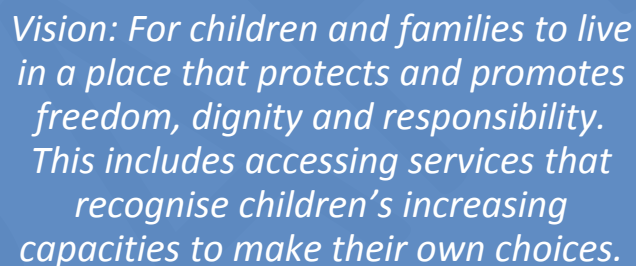
The following are the key indicators we will use to help us measure progress over the next three years:

- Child poverty
- Family overcrowding
- Childhood obesity and dental decay
- Implementation of a new mental health outcomes framework for children and families
- Accident and Emergency Attendance for 0-4 year olds and immunisation coverage
- Child immunisation coverage
- Feedback from children, families and stakeholders

Section 3: Playing a part and freedoms

This section looks at participation, communication, community cohesion, privacy and confidentiality and crime and youth justice. Analysis has been derived from child rights that have an emphasis on civic rights and responsibilities. These are:

- Article 5: Parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities
- Article 12: Respect for the views of the child
- Article 13: Freedom of expression
- Article 14: Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Article 15: Freedom of association
- Article 16: Right to privacy
- Article 17: Access to information from the media



Vision: For children and families to live in a place that protects and promotes freedom, dignity and responsibility. This includes accessing services that recognise children's increasing capacities to make their own choices.

Playing a part and freedoms: The story so far

Children and families in Tower Hamlets are active in their communities, and there is much to be proud of. For example:

- There is a wide range of ways for children and families to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Our School Councils, Youth Council and Parent and Carer Council are all excellent examples of this.
- We know that many children and families play an active role in their communities, ranging from volunteering to political participation. For example, the turn-out in the 2015 Young Mayor elections was 72 per cent.
- Tower Hamlets is diverse, with over 90% of pupils belonging to an ethnic background other than "White British". We are proud of this diversity and what this brings to the lives of local children and families.

However, we recognise that there is still room for improvement in these areas, and there are challenges to be overcome:

- We want to further develop the ways in which children and families are engaged with and influencing services and decision-making.
- We recognise that the ways we communicate with children and families need to keep pace with the ways children and families communicate with each other: This includes looking at how we use digital technology and improving how complex information is communicated.
- It is important that children and families feel part of their community, and we want to explore this issue in more detail to ensure this goal is met.

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Playing a part and freedoms: What we will do

This section describes our top three “Playing a Part and Freedoms” priorities and what we will do differently over the next three years. Each priority has a set of actions underneath it, setting out how we envisage the priority being met. The group or team of staff responsible for these is also stated. These groups or teams will work in partnership with a range of organisations in the borough and with children and families to ensure the priorities are met.

★ **Priority 10: Make sure the views of children and families are considered and taken seriously**

- Develop mechanisms to hear the views of children and families where there are gaps
- Develop processes for collating and sharing key messages from feedback to ensure they are acted on, articulated through an annual set of factsheets on the “views of children and young people”
- Ensure children and young people’s participation is integrated into all relevant strategies, policies and decisions, in line with the Tower Hamlets Community Engagement Strategy
- Develop “good practice” materials for all frontline staff on how to effectively engage with children at an individual level
- Provide additional support and promote the use of person-centred planning as a mechanism to ensure the views of vulnerable children and young people are listened to and taken seriously when making decisions which affect them
- Encourage parental engagement in the services used by children and young people by identifying where improvements are needed and taking appropriate action
- As part of the strategic review of the youth service ensure that the views of children and young people are taken into account and acted upon

➡ *The local authority’s Policy, Programme and Community Insight team and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Sub-Group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 11: Improve access to reliable information that is easy to understand**

- Develop “child and family friendly” information for relevant services by identifying areas for improvement and working with children and young people to address this. This will include information for newly arrived families on how to understand and navigate complicated systems
- Review the information provided to children and young people on issues of confidentiality
- Develop digital communication mechanisms that services use with children and young people in line with feedback, through the development of a shared “Communication Strategy”
- Review research on the impact of “screen use” on families as this emerges and taking appropriate action
- Promote the use of person-centred planning to ensure that information is accessible and meaningful to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- Support parents with parenting responsibilities through improved information, advice and support
- As part of the strategic review of the youth service ensure that information is available on the range of positive activities, “the youth service offer”, that children and young people can participate in
- Promote children and young people’s rights and responsibilities

➡ *The local authority’s Policy, Programme and Community Insight team and the voluntary sector will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 12: Support children and families of different backgrounds getting along well together**

- Carry out research to decipher the extent to which children and families feel that Tower Hamlets is a place where people of different ethnic background get along well together, and the reasons and solutions behind any identified issues
- Promote community cohesion, including intergenerational work and work to build a sense of community around where children and families live

➔ *The local authority's Policy, Programme and Community Insight team and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Sub-Group will lead on this priority.*

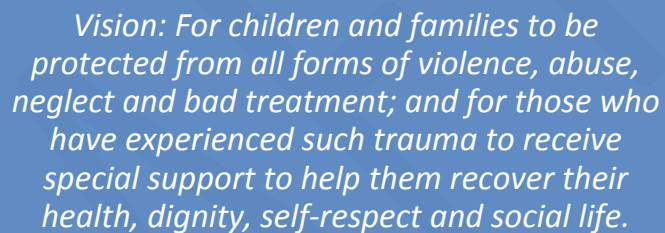
Playing a part and freedoms: How will progress be measured?

Feedback from children, families and stakeholders will be central in measuring progress towards these three priorities over the next three years.

Section 4: Free from harm

This section looks at situations where children and young people have been harmed or are at risk of being so. Analysis has been derived from child rights that have an emphasis on protection. These are:

- Article 19: Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- Article 20: Children unable to live with their family
- Article 34: Sexual exploitation
- Article 25: Review of treatment in care
- Article 21: Adoption
- Article 33: Drug abuse
- Article 37: Inhumane treatment and detention
- Article 40: Juvenile justice



Vision: For children and families to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment; and for those who have experienced such trauma to receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

Free from harm: The story so far

Through safeguarding activity, we have worked hard to protect children and young people from harm and to support families. Some of our key achievements to date are as follows:

- In a recent survey, 80% of primary and secondary school pupils said they felt very or quite safe in the area where they live.
- We have carried out a range of awareness-raising activity on issues relating to being free from harm. For example, last year over 1,000 young people and over 350 professionals attended training and workshops on tackling violence against women and girls.
- We have worked hard to support children and young people who are looked after. Compared to the England average, looked after children in Tower Hamlets are more likely to be placed close to home and are more likely to have a stable placement.
- Last year, the rate of referrals for Children's Social Care in Tower Hamlets was higher than the England average. We think these figures show that organisations are good at working together to help children at an early stage.

- We have carried out research on a number of areas of concern in order to get a full understanding of particular issues and how they need to be addressed. Recent examples include research on our approach to child sexual exploitation in Tower Hamlets and research into incidents where young people were involved in serious violent crime.

Building on these successes we recognise that there are areas we need to address over the next three years which include the following:

- We know that neglect can play a part in a number of child protection cases in Tower Hamlets. We want to continue to tackle this issue through our Neglect Strategy.
- We know that violent crime can have a devastating impact on both victims and perpetrators. There is evidence to suggest that violent crime involving young people is a particular concern in the borough, and we recognise that action is needed to address this.
- Domestic abuse and gender-based violence are key issues in the borough, and we recognise that they can have far-reaching and devastating impacts on children and families. We want to continue to tackle this and work through the Tower Hamlets Violence towards Women and Girls Plan.
- The radicalisation of young people has been an emerging issue in recent years. A range of activity has been put in place to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm in this regard, and we are committed to developing this work further.
- The use of psychoactive “legal highs” is another emerging issue, and we recognise that the advice and support provided to young people needs to reflect emerging trends.
- We continue to be ambitious for our looked after children. Looked after children can experience a range of barriers and issues, and we have developed a Looked After Children Strategy in order to tackle these.

Free from harm: What we will do

This section describes our top six “Free from Harm” priorities and what we will do differently over the next three years. Each priority has a set of actions underneath it, setting out how we envisage the priority being met. The group or team of staff responsible for these is also stated. These groups or teams will work in partnership with a range of organisations in the borough and with children and families to ensure the priorities are met.

★ **Priority 13: Protect children and families from harm and exploitation**

- Invest in families to protect children from harm and exploitation
- Reduce the number of children and young people experiencing neglect through the Neglect Strategy
- Combat child sexual exploitation through the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
- Reduce inequalities for children in need of help and protection by investigating the reasons behind these and taking appropriate action
- Address homophobic and transgender bullying by identifying and sharing good practice on this issue
- Support young carers by the development and delivery of a Carer Strategy
- Tackle child trafficking by gathering intelligence on the scale and nature of the problem in Tower Hamlets

➔ *The Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Family Wellbeing Steering Group and a new “task and finish” group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 14: Protect children from radicalisation and extremism**

- Combat radicalisation and extremism through the Prevent Delivery Plans and related work. This includes work to meet the following local strategic Prevent objectives:
- Target social, peer and educational support and advice to individuals identified as at risk of involvement in extremist activity and violence
- Strengthen positive social networks and institutions to increase their capacity to challenge extremism and violence and disrupt networks and organisations that are sympathetic to extremism and terrorism
- Increase Prevent awareness and enhance referrals for those that are vulnerable to extremism

➔ *The Prevent Programme Board will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 15: Address the causes and impact of violent crime for both victims and perpetrators**

- Carry out the recommendations arising from the review of cases where young people are involved in serious violent incidents, including reviewing mental health support for young people
 - Review the use and impact of Criminal Behaviour Orders in the borough
 - Continue to reduce offending and re-offending levels through implementing recommendations from the 2014 inspection of youth offending services
 - Review the experiences of young people in secure accommodation by working directly with them to see if any improvements are needed
 - Reduce inequalities in offending levels by investigating the reasons behind these and taking appropriate action
 - Improve understanding between the Police and young people through the development of a compact.
- ➔ *A new “task and finish” group linked to the Gang Strategic Advisory Group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 16: Protect children and families from the experience of and exposure to domestic abuse and gender-based violence**

- Ensure there are clear and explicit actions for children and families in the Violence towards Women and Girls plan
 - Investigate the issue of children who harm in more detail to understand the scale and nature of the issue and take appropriate action
- ➔ *The local authority’s Community Safety team and a new “task and finish” group linked to the Local Safeguarding Children Board will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 17: Protect children and young people from drug and alcohol abuse**

- Annually assess alcohol and substance misuse levels in parents, families and young people in order to inform appropriate action
 - Ensure children, families and staff have access to appropriate education, advice, education, support and specialist treatment services relating to substance misuse, delivered through the Borough’s Drug and Alcohol Strategy
 - Address the harm of “legal highs” by regulation, education, enforcement and, where appropriate, treatment ensuring the information, advice and service provision available to young people and professionals meets identified need including keeping up-to-date on emerging trends
 - Review substance misuse information and advice in line with feedback from children and young people
 - Address parental substance misuse by strengthening a multi-agency approach to the hidden harm agenda
- ➔ *The Hidden Harm Family Steering Group will lead on this priority.*

★ **Priority 18: Ensure looked after children get the support they need**

Improve the experience and support provided to looked after children through the delivery of a Looked After Children's Strategy. This includes further increasing the stability of placements, improving the number of looked after children placed close to home, further improving on health checks and outcomes for care leavers and looked after children, ensure that children are coming into care when they need to, reducing inequalities for looked after children and care leavers and reviewing information for looked after children on what will happen when they are older.

➔ *The local authority's Children's Social Care Senior Management team will lead on this priority.*

Free from harm: How will progress be measured?

- Local Safeguarding Children Board monitoring activity and annual report
- Violence towards Women and Girls plan delivery
- Number of bullying incidents due to homophobia
- Incidences of violence with children and young people as perpetrators or victims
- Admissions to hospital for under 18 year olds for alcohol specific issues
- Number of young carers receiving support
- Feedback from stakeholders, children and families

Monitoring the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan

The Tower Hamlets Children and Families Partnership Board plays an essential role in monitoring the delivery of the Children and Families Plan. The Board is made up of key partners, including representatives from the local authority, the Police, education and health. The core duties of the Board in relation to the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan are as follows:

- To approve, manage and review the Children and Families Plan and yearly action plans.
- To ensure the alignment to the decisions at a senior management level, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Council Strategic and Community Plans.
- To scrutinise and challenge services to ensure that the priorities of the Children and Families Plan are delivered, taking a troubleshooting role where there are concerns about performance.
- To make decisions about alignment or pooling of resources to meet the priorities identified in the Children and Families Plan.
- To monitor progress against the Children and Families Plan and deliver an annual progress report for publication.

A report summarising our progress on delivering the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan will be published each summer, starting from summer 2017.

Appendix I: Strategies related to the plan

The Children and Families Plan is the overarching strategic plan for children and families in the borough. The success of this Plan depends on the success of a number of interrelated strategies and plans that are held across the Partnership. These include:

- The 2016-19 Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- The 2016 Tower Hamlets Community Engagement Strategy
- The 2016-19 Carer Strategy
- The 2016 Tower Hamlets Local Plan
- The 2016 Looked After Children Strategy
- The 2016 Violence towards Women and Girls Plan
- The 2015 Ending Groups, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Strategy
- The 2013 Mental Health Strategy
- The Community Safety Partnership Plan
- The Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
- The Neglect Strategy
- The Tower Hamlets Drug and Alcohol Strategy
- The Annual Prevent Delivery Plan
- The Annual Youth Justice Plan
- Idea Store Health Strategy