



# THIS ACCELERATE!

The Tower Hamlets Children and  
Families Partnership Strategy  
**2024 – 2029**



**TOWER  
HAMLETS**  
THIS EAST LONDON

# Contents

Foreword	3
Children and young people in Tower Hamlets: the context	6
The Children and Families Partnership	12
Accelerate! Our Children and Families Strategy	16
Delivering Accelerate!	18
Annex A: Our priorities in detail	22
Annex B: Children and Families Partnership structure	40

# Foreword

We want Tower Hamlets to be a place where every child fulfils their potential.

Tower Hamlets is investing in the next generation. We're the first place in the country where every primary and secondary school pupil gets a free school meal. Our new Young Tower Hamlets programme will bring a youth centre in every ward. Children and their families will get access to the different services they need in new Family Hubs across Tower Hamlets. We're increasing investment in services for young people with Special Educational Needs, children we care for, children who need protection and those in trouble with the law. Our ambitious programme to deliver homes for the future, tackle overcrowding, help with the cost of living and boost leisure, sports and culture, will make Tower Hamlets a better place to raise a family.

But there is still much to do. That's why we are committed to working in partnership to deliver for families. With dedication, focus and a relentless commitment to putting babies, children and young people at the heart of our services, we will work together so that Tower Hamlets is a truly child-friendly borough.

**Lutfur Rahman,**  
Executive Mayor and  
Chair of the Partnership Executive Group

**Cllr Maium Talukdar,**  
Deputy Mayor and Co-Chair of the  
Every Chance for Every Child Forum





## Message from members of the **Every Chance for Every Child Forum**

We are proud to be members of the Every Chance for Every Child Forum, the Tower Hamlets Children and Families Partnership. As individual organisations and working together, we strive every day to deliver the very best opportunities and support to families and children.

This strategy is driven by what children and young people have told us. They love the diversity and the range of things to do in our borough, and quality of education offered in our schools. But young people are worried about cost of living and housing pressures. They want more support for their mental health and wellbeing. Too many young people are concerned about bullying and safety, discrimination and racism, and whether their achievements in education will translate into career opportunities. We know from statistics that the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and poor housing has had a lasting and negative impact on many aspects of children's lives.

The eight priorities in Accelerate! set out how the partnership will respond to the challenges that young people have set us. Our shared values – being child focused, family centred and collaborative; strengths-based and trauma informed; and focused on equality and anti-racist practice – will inform everything we do. Together we will deliver real change for children.

### **Members of the Every Chance for Every Child Forum**

# Children and young people in Tower Hamlets: the context

Our babies, children and young people are the future of our borough and its greatest strength. After increasing over the past decade, the number of children in Tower Hamlets is expected to remain at current levels until 2030. The number of school age children is likely to fall, while pre-schoolers are likely to increase. Our children are from diverse backgrounds and faiths. More than half are of Bangladeshi heritage, with significant numbers of children from White British, mixed heritage, and African including Somali heritage.

Tower Hamlets has become a world-class hub for financial, technological and creative industries. This growth brings opportunities, but also stresses. We are the most densely populated area in the UK, with pressures on services and open space, and high levels of population turnover.

High child poverty is exacerbated by housing costs and undermines children's wellbeing, health and opportunities. Overcrowding amongst families with dependent children is very high in Tower Hamlets and many aspects of children's lives - health, study, play and friendships - suffer as a result.

The borough has excellent schools, and children make good academic progress from the time they start school. Despite having the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the country, analysis from the Education Policy Institute shows that the 'disadvantage gap' for Tower Hamlets pupils is amongst the smallest of any local area.

There is more to do. Our youngest children are less likely than their peers elsewhere to start school with a good level of development, and take up of free education entitlements is low. In our schools, historically high rates of attendance declined in the wake of the pandemic. We want more young people to stay in education after 16, to fulfil their potential from birth onwards and progress to training, further and higher education.

A healthy childhood is the foundation for a healthy adulthood. Despite concerted focus, the effects of the pandemic, austerity and poverty are seen in a number of key child health measures. Children and young people tell us that mental health is a priority, reflecting national trends showing a rise in probable mental disorder in children.

The number of children and young people with additional needs is higher compared to other areas, with many children requiring support for Speech, Language and Communication, as well as Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

For young people, like their parents, safety in their neighbourhoods, schools and at home is an important concern. A significant minority of children say they do not feel safe in their local area, or have experienced bullying in the past year. Rates of the most serious violence affecting young people declined sharply between 2018 and late 2019, and have been largely steady since: we must continue to do all we can to reduce these rates and protect our children and young people from harm.



# Children and young people in Tower Hamlets



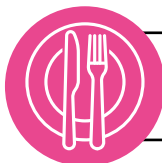
There were **64,200** 0-17 year-olds in 2021. That's **21%** of the population, and an increase of 8,855 between 2011 - 2021.

**61%** of children under 18 live in a couple family household, **21.5%** live in a lone parent household, and **16.5%** live in another kind of household.



**9 in 10** children were born in the UK.

**58%** of children in the borough are from a Bangladeshi background, **15.5%** from a White background, **8%** from a mixed heritage background, and **7%** from a Black background. **2.5%** of children under 16 years are of Somali heritage.



**4 in 10** school pupils are entitled to means-tested free school meals. (2023 school census)

More than **1 in 4 children (27%)** are living in relative low income families. (2022 Children in Low Income households). This figure rises to around 1 in 2 children when housing costs are taken into account.



**53%** of eligible children took up the free education entitlement for disadvantaged two year olds: the lowest figure in London (2022) **60.5%** of 5 year olds have a good level of development, below the London (67.8%) average (21/22)



**44%** of households with dependent children are overcrowded.



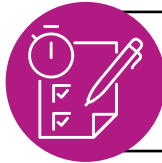
**98%** of primary pupils and **89%** of secondary pupils in the borough are in schools rated good or outstanding (2021/22)



**66%** of pupils in year 6 met the expected standard in reading writing and maths, equal to the London average (66%) (2022/23)



# Children and young people in Tower Hamlets



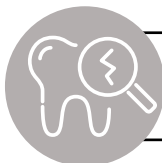
**54.5%** pupils achieved grade 5+ in GCSE English and Maths, slightly lower than the inner London average (56.6%) (2021/22)

The average A level result in Tower Hamlets is **C+**, compared to B for London as a whole. (2021/22)



**26.5%** of pupils were persistently absent from school in autumn 2022/23, slightly above the inner London average of 23.8%.

**20.5%** of reception age children, and **46%** of year 6 children were overweight or obese (2021/22).



**29.5%** of five year olds have visually obvious decay, above the London average of 25.8%. (2021/22)

**18%** of pupils have a special need or disability. (2022/23)



**73.8%** of five year olds received two doses of the MMR vaccine, below the London average of 74%, and well below the 95% coverage required to achieve herd immunity (2022/23).



There were **142** first time entrants to the criminal justice system for every 100,000 10-17 year olds, below the London average of 167. (2022)



**301** children were looked after, including **31** unaccompanied asylum seeking children (March 2023). The through care service was working with **459** young people aged 14 to 25.



**84%** of pupils felt safe in their local areas. **28%** of pupils reported that they had been bullied at school during the past year. (Pupil Attitude Survey 2022)



# The Children and Families Partnership

The organisations that make up the Children and Families Partnership are proud of the work we do together and with the borough's children and families.

The new Mayor and his administration were elected in 2022 with an ambitious agenda for children and young people and a ground-breaking programme of support. This includes being the first local area to expand universal free school meals to secondary as well as primary schools, introduction of Education Maintenance Allowance and bursaries, and investment in youth, leisure, and community language services for young people.

Tower Hamlets has one of the largest and most diverse voluntary and community sectors in London, with an active inter-faith network and a network of equality-focused organisations. 96% of our schools are good or outstanding. Health partners have a track record of innovative work with families and children. The new Integrated Care System offers an opportunity to put resources and a focus on children's health at the heart of partnership working.

Tower Hamlets was hugely affected by the pandemic, with a significant impact on children, families and the workforce. Public sector, voluntary organisations, faith and community groups and local volunteers came together with a determination to support all families in the borough with a focus on the most vulnerable children.

Since the pandemic, the partnership continues to work closely to meet new challenges: the cost of living crisis, the legacy of the pandemic for vulnerable children, responding to the Black Lives Matters movement, and children and young people's involvement in shaping our priorities.

We have deepened our relationships through our Safeguarding Children Partnership, a new Play Charter, development of an Integrated Care System, and integrated services for families through our new Family Hubs and our Early Partnership Strategy. At the same time, we have been collaborating to address some of our shared challenges as organisations, including recruiting

and retaining the best children's workforce, the quality and use of data we hold, and the impact of austerity and funding pressures on our work.

Our previous strategy – 'Every Chance for Every Child' – saw many important developments. The pandemic disrupted progress. This new strategy will take a responsive approach, with clear timebound delivery plans, and flexibility to adjust priorities.

We will constantly look for ways to empower children and families, to improve and innovate, and to intervene early when children are in need of extra support.



# How we developed Accelerate!

To develop Accelerate!, the partnership drew on discussions with children, young people and families which informed our new Early Help, Safeguarding Partnership and Tower Hamlets Partnership Plans. The Pupil Attitude Survey 2022 provided important evidence about children's lives and experiences.

- Summer 2023: A high-level synthesis of data, evidence and feedback from young people was carried out on behalf of the partnership by the organisation Basis.
- July and September 2023: Basis led the Every Chance for Every Child Forum in two Theory of Change and action planning workshops.
- July and August 2023: the team held further stakeholder consultations, and attended Family Fun Day and In the Neighbourhood events to find out what families felt about the strategy priorities.

Secondary pupils and priorities: presented to Every Chance for Every Child Forum at January 2023 takeover session. Mental Health (removing stigma, trusted relationships, information about available support, training co-produced with young people) Bullying (peer pressure, reputations, kindness and trusted adults)

The most common free time activities for pupils were visiting a park or playground, and reading a book or newspaper. **Pupil Attitude Survey 2022**

*I've just moved here I like it. It's a cool area. I like the aesthetics. It's very youth, very street. Although it's very, very overpriced. Housing's a real problem.* **Teenage girl, In the Neighbourhood**

*When I had my son, it was in Covid and things were weird. I had lots of different health visitors. Now I have an excellent health visitor. She did things like check my older child had had his two year check. She also told me about the Children's Centre, that was really good.* **Mother of a toddler and baby**

34% of primary pupils and 56% of secondary pupils would like to do a professional job in the future. **Pupil Attitude Survey 2022**

28% of pupils reported they had been bullied at school in the last year. **Pupil Attitude Survey 2022**

*(Social media) is something I'm really worried about. We didn't have it in my day. When you left school, it was like it was over, but these kids are bullying them (online).* **Parent at the Family Fun Day**

The top three things that pupils said would make life better were: more places where I can go to spend time with my friends; more interesting school lessons, and more help to plan for my future. **Pupil Attitude Survey 2022**

69% of primary school, and 43% of secondary school pupils reported that they 'feel happy about life at the moment'. **Pupil Attitude Survey 2022**

Youth council: feedback on priorities to Children and Families Executive April 2023: Child poverty, Mental health services, Cultural capital, Standards of social housing

*I didn't know any of this existed. It was only because my sister said there are children's centres. Maybe... when you're in hospitals (midwives) come and at the very earliest stages (and shows) what's available for you. You just need to make yourself a bit more visible.* **Mother of toddler, Family Fun Day**

*I'm in temporary accommodation right now. It's really hard pressure. (My son's) getting older...he's growing, he needs his own kind of space, his own room.* **Parent at the Family Fun Day**

*We go to the children's centre a lot for stay and play. They were brilliant in detecting my daughter's speech issues and getting her a bit of extra support. It helped a lot.* **Mother, Family Fun Day**



# Accelerate! Our Children and Families Strategy

## OUR VISION

Every organisation in the Children and Families Partnership works towards our shared vision:

*A child-friendly borough where children and young people from all backgrounds thrive, achieve their best, have opportunities, and are listened to.*

This vision has been developed collectively, and co-production with children, families and partners will always be a core principle for how we work in Tower Hamlets.

## OUR VALUES

As partners working with children and families, relationships are at the heart of our work. Our shared values are:

- being child-focused
- working with the whole family, with a collaborative and co-production approach
- being strengths-based and trauma-informed
- recognising and working actively to combat discrimination and racism.

These values reflect the partnership principles set out in the wider Tower Hamlets Partnership Plan, and are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## OUR AMBITIONS

To achieve our vision, the partnership has agreed six ambitions, based on what children and families told us matters most and where partners can make the biggest difference working together. Equality and co-production will guide our work in each area. We want every child and young person to:

1. Have a great start in life
2. Enjoy the best possible health during childhood
3. Get support for good mental health and wellbeing when they need it
4. Get the right support at the right time if they have special educational needs or a disability
5. Feel safe and secure
6. Achieve their best in education and have opportunities to develop a career

As a partnership, we will also tackle the wider barriers in society that stop children fulfilling their potential. We will work alongside families, children and the wider Tower Hamlets partnership to:

7. Support families to be resilient in the cost of living and child poverty crisis
8. Champion co-production, equality and anti-racism

# Delivering Accelerate!

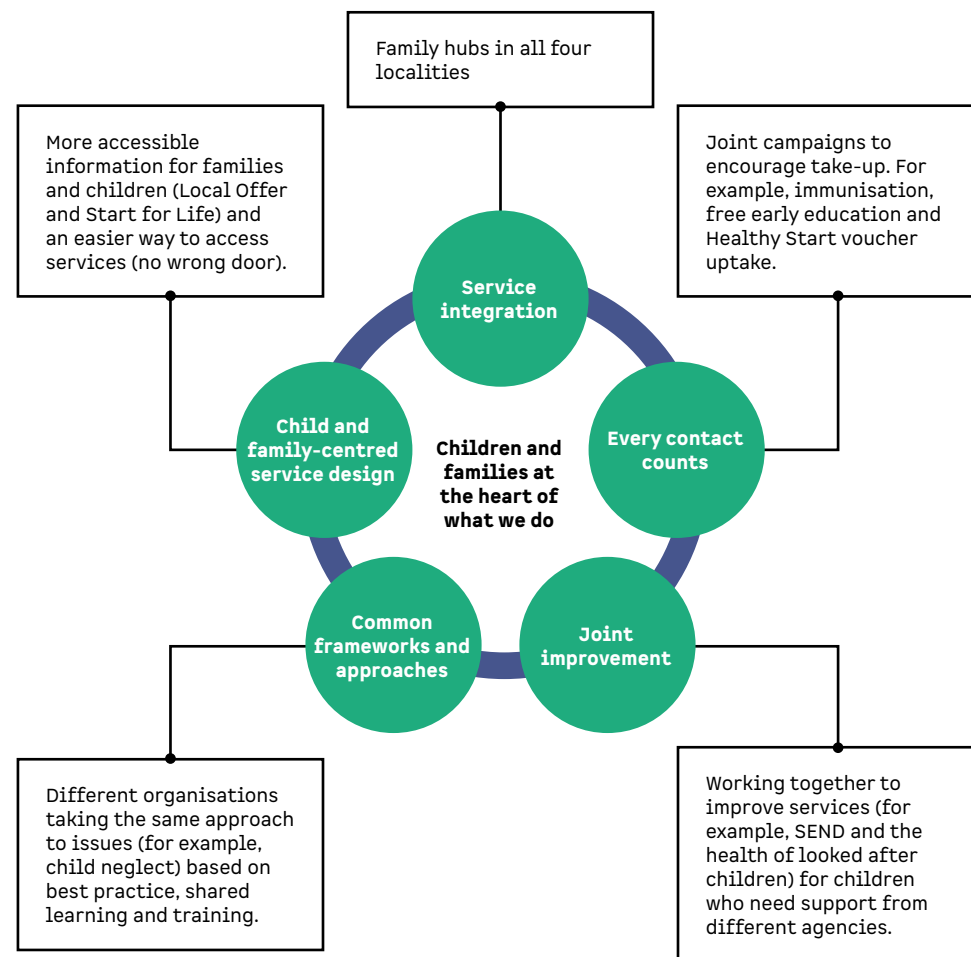
The needs and aspirations of children and young people are the focus of our partnership. Although partners come from different organisations with different mandates and funding streams, we aspire to work as one partnership with an emphasis on early intervention, prevention and achieving the very best outcomes for every child.

We will work together to improve children's lives and reduce inequalities with the same urgency that we used to respond to Covid. As individual organisations and as a partnership, we will be advocates for children and families and the funding, good housing, play spaces and high quality workforce that they need to thrive.

We will adopt a range of approaches - shown by the diagram - underpinned by our shared partnership values. The Covid pandemic and cost of living pressures have shown that partnerships work best when they are responsive and focused. We will take a flexible approach, building on a strong foundation of trust and collaboration, and regularly take stock of how our partnership is working.



## HOW WE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP



# Governance and reporting

Delivery and oversight of the strategy is summarised in the diagram on the right. Each delivery group will report on progress to the Children and Families Executive on a rolling basis at one of the Executive's bi-monthly meetings. There will be an initial review of the groups as part of delivery planning for the strategy.

A summary of progress against the strategy outcomes will be reported to the Partnership Executive Group annually.

Each year, a short annual stocktake will review whether the strategy priorities are still correct, using feedback from children and families as well as data and inspection outcomes.

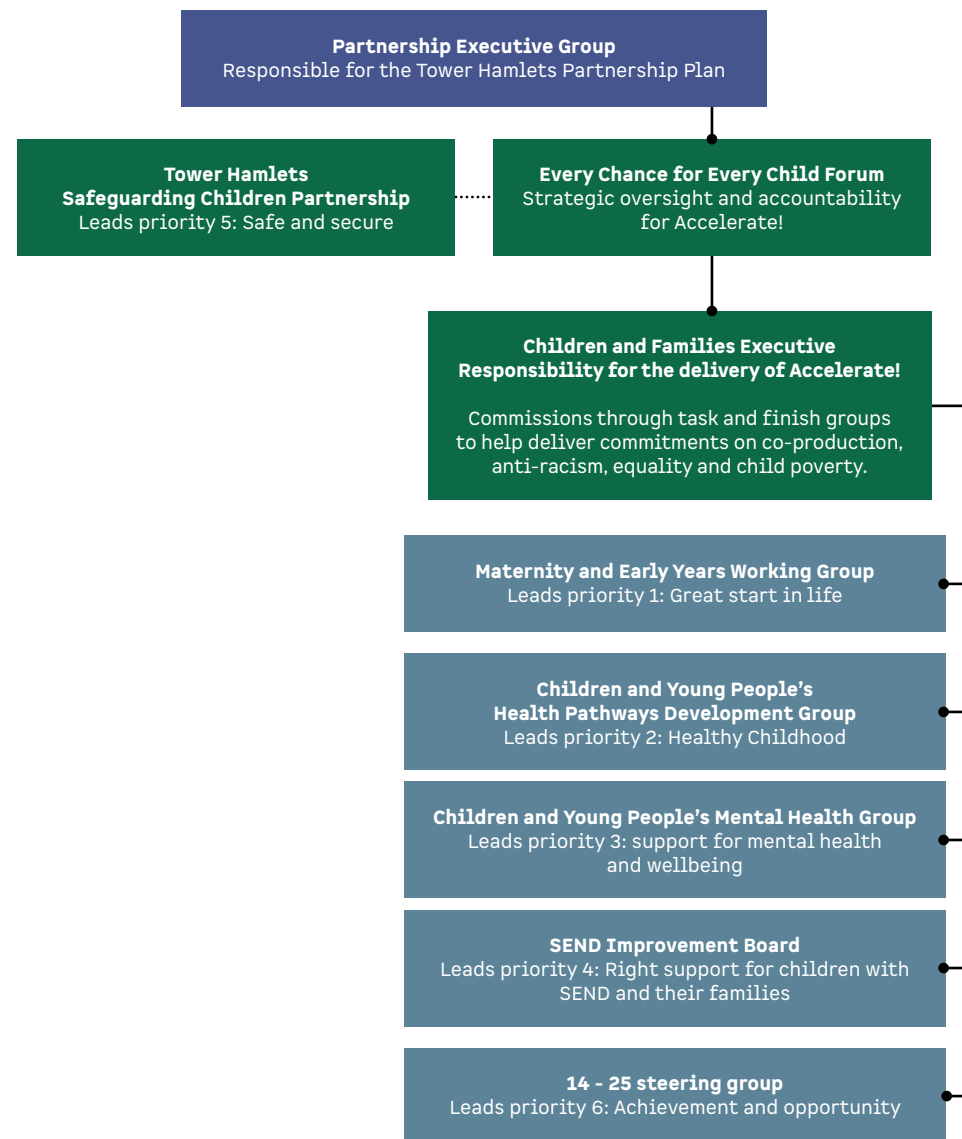
The Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership will lead the delivery of the safe and secure priority. Its published annual report will provide progress updates and highlight new work programmes.

See Annex B for an overview of the wider Children and Families partnership

Partners have agreed **six principles for improvement**. These are shared in common with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

1. Resources to support children and families should go to those who most need them
2. Feeling connected and included is a foundation of wellbeing and the importance of this should be built into services and programme
3. Being treated equally, respectfully and without discrimination should be the norm when using services
4. Information and advice for children and families should be clear, simple, and produced with those who will benefit from them
5. Children and families should feel that they have equal power in shaping and designing services and programme
6. We should all be working together to make the best use of the assets we already have that support children and families.

# Delivery and oversight of Accelerate!



## Annex A: our partnership ambitions in detail



# Ambition 1: A great start in life Led by the Maternity and Early Years Working Group

The first 1001 days of life, from conception to age two years, are critical for children's development and set the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing. Babies and young children need secure attachment to their primary caregiver, a safe environment, and plenty of play and stimulation.

There are lots of services for Tower Hamlets families with babies and young children, with a network of twelve well-attended Children and Families Centres, a new Start for Life offer, and a host of excellent community-based and voluntary sector services. Our ActEarly research collaboration is providing important insights into what makes a difference for the youngest children. Infant safety and safe sleeping are priorities for our safeguarding partnership.

However, focused work is needed so that the youngest children thrive. Priority issues include support for maternal wellbeing and health, making sure parents access the full range of social, health and early years services on offer including GP registration, and identifying early when young children need extra help with issues like speech and language. Our partnership Early Help Strategy - encompassing our Start for Life offer - will guide our support for families with babies and young children.

## What children and families say

Families involved in developing the Early Help Strategy told us that they wanted an accessible single point of access for services, flexible services which broke down language and access barriers, widely available information on services, and comprehensive support that works with families so that there are not multiple workers per family and families don't need to retell their stories.

## What we will do together

1. Introduce Family Hubs in the four localities of Tower Hamlets delivering Early Help to support children and families in a fully integrated service and ensure children are accessing universal services.
2. Develop our integrated 'Start for Life' offer as part of delivery of our Early Help Strategy, including the antenatal pathway to identify pre- and perinatal maternal problems early, offer support and signpost.
3. Equip the 'Start for Life' workforce (pregnancy to 2 years) to better support perinatal emotional wellbeing, immunisation uptake, communication development and social prescribing by implementing, evaluating and rolling-out innovative workforce models.
4. Support increased take up of free early education entitlements for two and three year olds.
5. Support parents to make informed choices around breastfeeding, and strengthen practical support, including for starting solid foods.
6. Ensure families and professionals are aware of the range of services available for young families in the borough

## How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Increased percentage of babies born at a healthy weight
2. Increased percentage of babies breastfed at 6-8 weeks.
3. Increased percentage of eligible disadvantaged two year olds accessing the free early education entitlement.
4. Increased percentage of children in reception assessed as a good level of development

# Ambition 2: A healthy childhood

## Led by the Children & Young People Pathway Development Group; and Healthy Weight Programme

Every child and young person should have the best possible standard of health. Our partnership has a history of working together to support healthy families: from our award winning asthma and wheeze project 'Stopping the Monster Days' to taking on junk food advertising with our Healthier Food Advertising Policy.

We are the only area where all primary and secondary pupils receive free school meals. Our 'Health Determinants Research Collaboration' will place evidence on health inequalities at the heart of services and investments. Children's needs are a priority workstream for the new North East London Integrated Care System.

We have significant challenges in a number of dimensions of children's health where progress has stalled or reversed since the pandemic, including childhood immunisations, healthy weight, and dental decay. Respiratory conditions are also an issue, and pupils have identified reducing pollution as a priority.

### What children and families say

According to the Pupil Attitude Survey data, a significant number of children and young people in Tower Hamlets fall short of the recommended daily fruit and vegetable intake, with many expressing worries about maintaining a healthy weight.

### What we will do together

1. Implement our joint children's healthy weight programme, expanding opportunities for children to play, keep moving and eat well, making the best use of our leisure services and planning powers
2. Deliver a joint plan to increase immunisation uptake, including new places where immunisations can be given.
3. Develop innovative partnership approaches to tackle poor air quality, overcrowding and damp and mould and their impact on children's health, building on insights from the Health Determinants Research Collaboration.
4. Improve information sharing between schools, local authority and health services to more effectively support families.

### How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Increased percentage of children who have received two doses of the MMR vaccine at age 5
2. Increased percentage of children in reception at a healthy weight
3. Increased percentage of children in year 6 at a healthy weight

# Ambition 3: Support for good mental health and wellbeing

## Led by the Children and Young People's Mental Health Group

Good mental health is part of a healthy childhood. National data shows a rise in probable mental disorder in children since 2017, and this reflects what young people have told us about the impact of lockdown, anxiety, isolation and loss of coping mechanisms. Tower Hamlets has above average prevalence of mental illness in school aged children and mental health admissions for children.

There are a range of local services available, from Kooth online, the Emotional Wellbeing Service in schools, to clinical programmes and tailored interventions. We will work to create a borough where children have fun and feel happy and supported. We want all children and young people to receive timely, appropriate support and have a choice of services, acting early when problems emerge or children face difficult life events, trauma or bereavement. Our support needs to be flexible and culturally competent, because children have different experiences and changing needs.

### What children and families say

Young people tell us how much mental health matters to them. Only 40% of secondary school pupils surveyed in the 2022 Pupil Attitude Survey reported feeling happy in their lives. Primary and secondary pupils told the partnership about the need to reduce stigma surrounding mental health, trusted relationships with professionals and access to quality services. The Youth Council highlighted the impact of long waits for mental health services.

### What we will do together

1. Implement the 'Thrive' framework as the cornerstone of our partnership approach to mental health services for young people. We will work as a system to expand and invest in early intervention and prevention, and work towards integrated referral pathways.
2. Improve mental health support for children and young people with SEND and with learning disabilities, those we look after, children in trouble with the law or children who are bereaved.
3. Improve well-being for all our children and young people by introducing the evidence-based 'five ways to wellbeing' into play, youth, leisure and culture services.
4. Ensure more children, families and professionals are aware of how to support mental health in Tower Hamlets.

### How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Increased percentage of children feel happy in their lives (Pupil Attitude Survey)
2. Reduction in waiting times for key services (including CAMHS)
3. Young people report improvements in service access/'no wrong door' for mental health services, and experience of services

# Ambition 4: The right support for children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families

## Led by the SEND Improvement Board

In Tower Hamlets, the number of children and young people with additional needs is higher than average with a growing number of families requesting support.

As a partnership, we are committed to getting support right for children with SEND and their families. Since 2021, partners have worked together and increased funding to improve services in areas identified in an inspection of SEND support. Good progress has been made, for example in the quality and timeliness of plans to support young people, and communication with the SEND young people's 'Our Time' youth forum and parent carer forum. We will continue to make improvements, and to identify and support children who have additional needs at an early stage so they get the support they need to thrive.

We also want to make sure that Tower Hamlets is a child-friendly borough for every child, by making sure our rich play, sport, culture and youth services offer is accessible and inclusive for all.

### What children and families say

Feedback from the 'Our Time' youth forum, Independent SEND parents' forum, and 'Let's Talk SEND' events is shaping the partnership's improvement agenda. Families have told us they need better systems to avoid the need to keep repeating their story, more support while waiting for a diagnosis, and assistance with life skills, work experience and transitions to adult services.

### What we will do together

1. Deliver and sustain improvements to support for children and young people with SEND.
2. Agree and deliver a new SEND strategy for 2024 - 2029 which embeds our co-production and wider inclusion agenda

### How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Feedback from the Our Time Youth Forum and SEND Parent Carer Forum
2. Outcome of SEND area inspection
3. Percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within statutory timescales (20 weeks)
4. Average Autism Spectrum diagnosis waiting times



# Ambition 5: Safe and secure Led by the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership

We have been working hard to make sure all children and families feel safe and secure, but with new dangers arising online, and an increase in domestic abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic, there is more to be done to protect them from all kinds of harm.

Public services, voluntary, community and faith organisations have a vital role in working together keeping babies, children and young people safe: from the support provided by schools, to health services' support for prevention and health promotion, the work of the police in tackling the risk of serious youth violence, to relationship-based practice in children's social care. Over the past two years, focused work by Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership on online safety, exploitation and domestic abuse has led to improvements in practice across different agencies.

The partnership's work in this area will be led by the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Partnership, with an evolving set of priorities designed with children and young people.

## What children and families say

Safeguarding priorities have been informed by a design process led by the Young Scrutineers, working with the young people's CAMHS participation group, the young carers group and the Barts Health youth empowerment squad. Young people highlighted sexual harassment, bullying, and the relationship between police and young people as key issues.

## What we will do together

1. Continuously improve our safeguarding partnership building on 2023's Six steps for independent scrutiny report.
2. Implement the 2023 - 2025 Safeguarding Children Partnership priorities to improve safeguarding practice in relation to neglect; peer-on-peer harm including bullying and sexual harassment; infant safety; and anti-racism and cultural competence. Refresh priorities to reflect experience and young people's and partners' input.
3. Support young people at risk of exploitation or of becoming in trouble with the law, using our investment in youth services, youth justice and early help.
4. Focus on safeguarding young people and early intervention in our Community Safety Partnership's Serious Violence Strategy and collaborate with Violence against Women initiatives to protect children and older girls.

## How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Achievement of the outcomes agreed by the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership Plan 2023-25
2. Improvements in outcomes for children and young people measured as part of the Violence against Women Girls strategy and Serious Violence Strategy.

# Ambition 6: Achieve their best in education and opportunities to develop a career

## Led by the 14 to 25 Learning and Achievement Group

We are proud of our children and young people's achievements, and of the families, and excellent schools and colleagues that nurture their development and ambition.

The pandemic lockdowns and time away from school disrupted children's education. The Mayor's programme of financial support for young people through the extension of Free School Meals, Educational Maintenance Allowance and bursaries will support young people to thrive, to progress to further and higher education, and fulfil their potential. There is more to be done to ensure young people can explore opportunities across different employment sectors, and build a meaningful future for themselves.

### What children and families say

The Youth Council highlighted that a lot of young people feel confined in Tower Hamlets due to their disadvantaged background.

### What we will do together

1. Support families and schools to raise attendance.
2. Work to retain more students in Tower Hamlets in Key Stage 5 and increase the number of youngsters who are supported to access further and higher education.
3. Collaborate to deliver careers guidance, mentoring, life skills and work experience with a focus on building the confidence, connections and experience of young people who face barriers to accessing opportunities
4. Work together so that care-experienced young people and young people with SEND are supported into adulthood as part of delivering our Corporate Parenting and SEND strategies.

### How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Reduced absence and persistent absence from school.
2. Improved attainment in post 16 education
3. Increased percentage of residents studying in the borough in post 16 education
4. Reduced percentage of care experienced young people and young people with SEND who are not in education, employment or training

# Ambition 7: Support families in the cost of living and child poverty crisis Led by the Children and Families Executive working with the wider partnership

As a partnership, we believe that high levels of deprivation do not inevitably lead to poor outcomes. Children in Tower Hamlets achieve well in school despite the levels of child poverty in the borough. However, the cost of living crisis and pressure on housing is hitting families hard.

Combatting child poverty is a priority for the partnership, building on a cost of living package, universal free school meals, bursary and EMA programmes. Working together through our Combatting Poverty task and finish group we will use our reach into communities and provision of information to support families to increase their incomes, reduce living costs and take advantage of youth, leisure, and voluntary sector-led activities for young people. We will advocate for children so they are a priority in housing, economic and regeneration partnerships and we will urgently seek solutions to reduce and mitigate the impacts of overcrowding and poor housing on children.

## What children and families say

The pressing nature of this issue has been acknowledged by various groups, such as the Youth Council, who have identified child poverty as a top priority. The impact of the cost of living crisis on young people is profound, with significant levels of stress and worry affecting their mental health and ability to concentrate in school. A notable 40% of pupils surveyed in the 2022 Pupil Attitude Survey said they worry about money. Families tell us it can be difficult to find out about support.

## What we will do together

1. Increase opportunities for families using our services to access their entitlements
2. Support parents into good work through links with training, employment and volunteering providers
3. Adopt 'poverty-proofing' so that services across the partnership are inclusive
4. Develop innovative and impactful approaches to reduce the harmful effects of overcrowding on children, working across our partnership to ensure that children's safety, development and play is at the heart of housing, planning and environmental programmes.

## How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Implementation of measures to reduce the impact of overcrowding on children's wellbeing and the number of children in unsuitable housing conditions or temporary accommodation.
2. Increased percentage of eligible families taking up Healthy Start vouchers
3. Services for children adopting elements of poverty proofing programmes
4. Increased number of parents (especially mothers) who access entitlements, training, volunteering and employment.

# Ambition 8: Champion co-production, equality and anti-racism

## Led by the Children and Families Executive working with the wider partnership

Our borough's strength lies in its diversity and the different communities and cultures living side by side. As a partnership we are committed to standing up for social justice. This means tackling racism and discrimination head on, and we will work with young people and families to develop plans and ideas together.

Tower Hamlets Early Help, Youth Services and Statutory Children's Service are adopting a new set of principles and practices for working together with children and families, focussed on valuing families' experiences and empowering people. We also need to pay attention to how children and families' different backgrounds play a role in the way we interact with them and ensure that no one is disadvantaged because of this. Our youth justice service, for example, has an action plan to address disproportionality and discrimination. Building on this promising start, we all can do more to ensure all children and families' voices shape services in Tower Hamlets, and these are responsive to their diverse needs and contexts.

### What children and families say

Young people taking part in discussions about safeguarding priorities drew attention to experiences of racism. They also wanted to develop better relations with the police.

### What we will do together

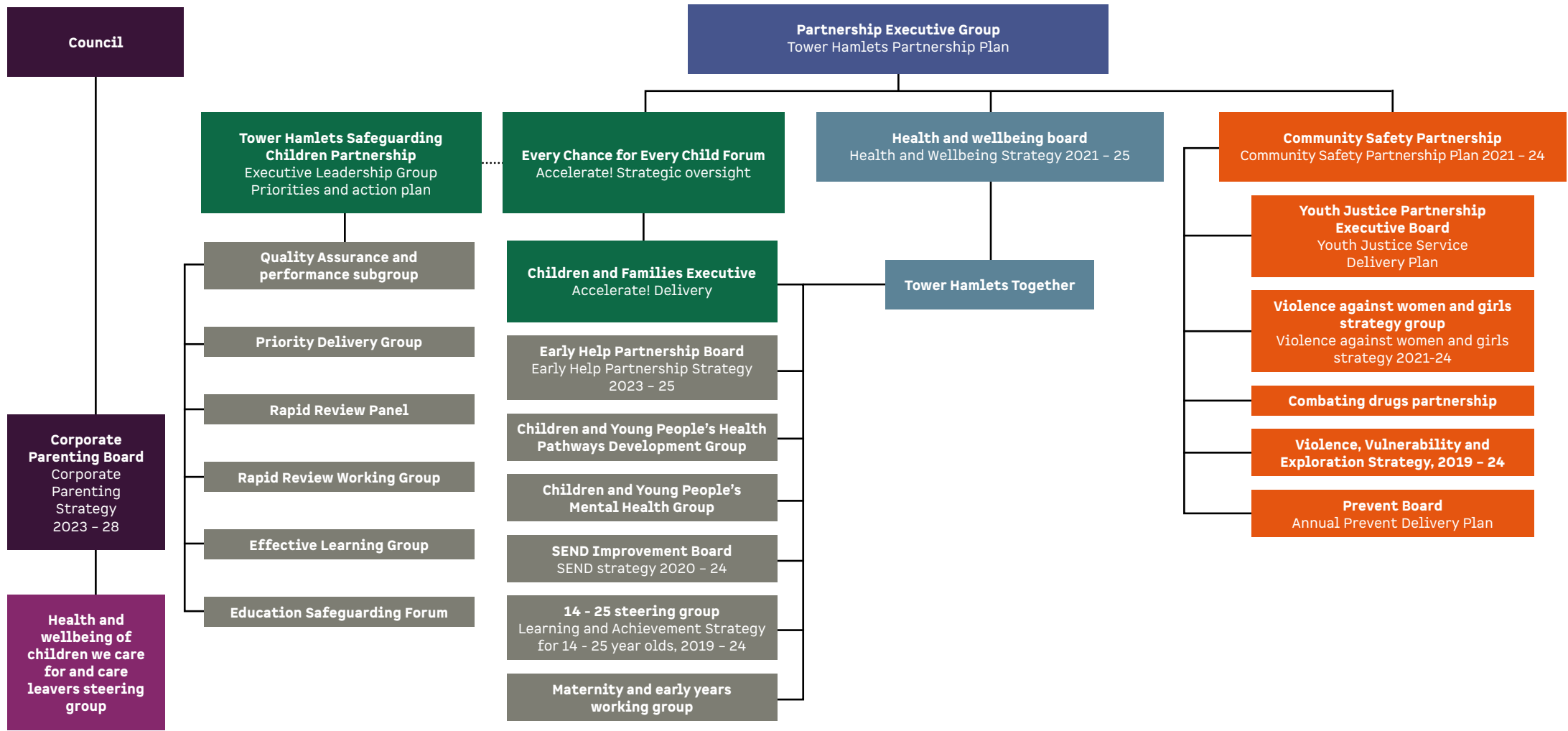
1. Develop best practice so that children and families are involved in co-producing programmes and strategies consistently and well. We will work alongside the Tower Hamlets Together Engagement Leads group and develop shared approaches (for example on reward and recognition).
2. Including a 'you said, we did' section in partnership reports.
3. Develop and build on our programme of anti-racism in schools and school governance
4. Implement the Youth Justice Service Disproportionality Action Plan
5. Champion the rights of care experienced children and young people, including through adopting care experience as a protected characteristic
6. Ensure all services record and analyse protected characteristics of service users to tackle inequalities.

### How will we know we are making a difference?

1. Increased percentage of children say people from different backgrounds get on well in borough (Pupil Attitude Survey)
2. Inequalities addressed in each partnership priority
3. Service and strategy design demonstrates the input of children, young people and families.

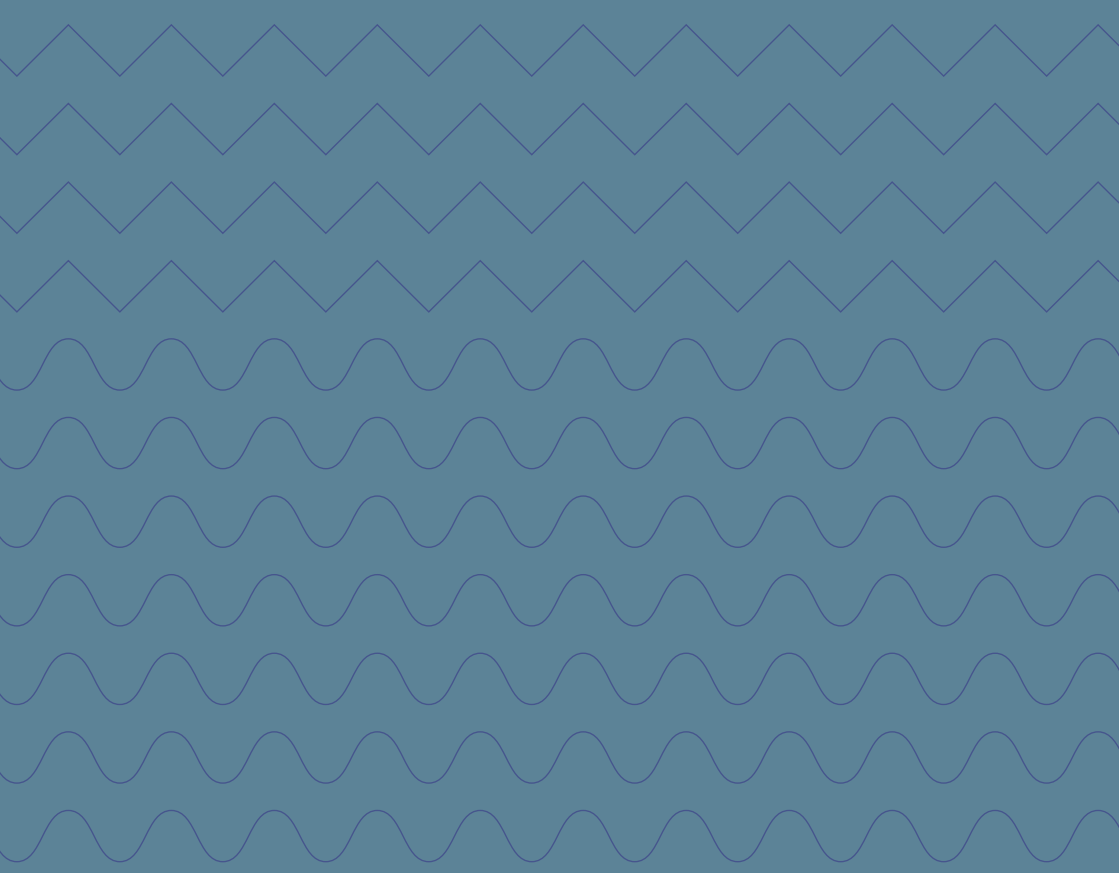
## Annex B: Our Children and Families Partnership





Schools, early years settings, voluntary, community, faith organisations and many others

Babies, children, young people and their families



**TOWER  
HAMLETS**  
THIS EAST LONDON