



## Let's Talk SEND Updates and Information

Information on previous and upcoming Let's Talk SEND events and updates on the borough's SEND improvement journey can be found on the [Local Offer](#).

### Welcome to this edition of the Let's Talk SEND supplement.

I am pleased to highlight the success of the most recent Let's Talk SEND event in November which was co-produced with the Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum and the borough's Parent and Carer Council. It was great to meet and hear from so many parents and carers on the day and share the progress we have been making to improve services in the local area.

This edition features important updates on our plans to improve the support available for families waiting for an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment and the progress made to tackle waiting times. We are also pleased to share plans to transform Early Years Speech and Language Therapy, including the early positive impact of pilot schemes in the borough.

Finally, I would like to touch on the Youth Achievement Awards ceremony held before Christmas (an event organised by young people



for young people) and was pleased to see young people with SEND well represented in the award nominations and receiving recognition. I am delighted to report that Sornnaly Hossain (Chair of the SEND Our Time Youth Forum), was recognised with a Young Inspirational Leader award on the night.

**Steve Nyakatawa**  
**Director of Education**  
**London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Let us know what you would like to see in our next 'Spotlight On...' as part of the termly Let's Talk SEND supplement. Email [parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:parentalengagement@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

For more information, visit [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/let-s-talk-send](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/let-s-talk-send)

More information on the support available to families can be found at [www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com](http://www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com)

### TERMS

**SENCOs** are also referred to as SENDCOs (Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinators) in some schools.

**SENDIASS** refers to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service.



Scan the QR code or click [here](#) for the SEND Improvement Board Annual Report 2021.



## Let's Talk SEND Information Market Place

Over 70 parents and carers attended the Let's Talk SEND information market place event, organised by the Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum and Tower Hamlets Parent and Carer Council.

The event provided an opportunity for the Local Offer and Family Information Service, the NHS, DLR, Young V&A and others to connect with families and share information about their services. Parents attending valued the chance

to speak with leaders from Tower Hamlets and hear about the planned improvements to SEND services.



If you missed the event, scan the QR code or click [here](#) for the presentations from the Director of Education, Steve Nyakatawa, and SEN Service Manager, Lewis Teasdale.

[www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/let-s-talk-send](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/let-s-talk-send)



**Updates on autism and speech and language therapy from James Courtney,  
Senior Commissioning Manager, Children, Young People and Maternity,  
Tower Hamlets Children's Integrated Commissioning Team**

## Autism – updating families on progress

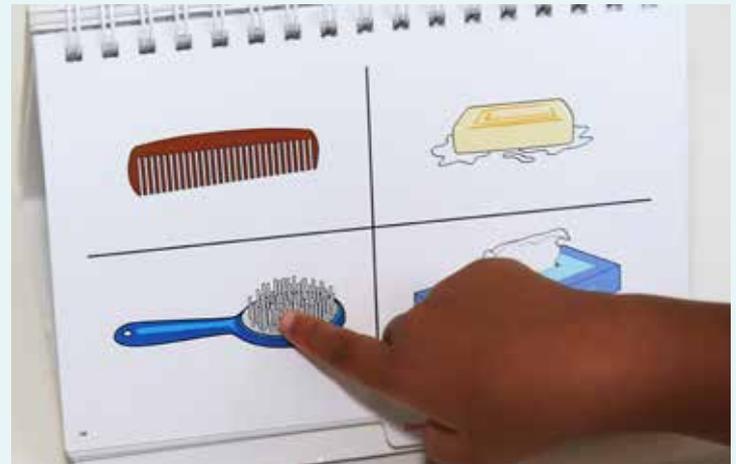
The waiting time for an autism assessment for local children and young people is currently just under two years. Local families have expressed their concern about having to wait so long.

This problem was raised in the 2021 SEND inspection. Since then we have worked hard to improve local services including:

- Barts Health NHS Trust has recruited additional therapists and has worked to simplify the autism assessment process.
- More than 25 children and young people now receive an autism diagnosis decision each month – this is three times more than in 2021
- The London Autism Clinic, an independent organisation that provides NHS Services, has been funded to deliver 20 more assessments per month
- To support families while they are waiting for an assessment, social communication navigators will offer one-to-one appointments for families at local children and family centres
- This approach will be tested in the Southwest locality in the spring and then all of Tower Hamlets later this year. Families can still access support at their local children and family centre.

To learn how to access a children and family centre, visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/childrenandfamilycentres](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/childrenandfamilycentres)

To find out more about autism support for families on the Local Offer, visit [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/information-and-support-about-autism](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/information-and-support-about-autism)



### Early Years Speech and Language Therapy – an update

Families have asked for speech and language therapy that is local and easy to access.

Barts Health and the Early Help & Children and Families Service have been testing group sessions for parents and children in children and family centres in Tower Hamlets.

The Play and Connect group sessions are now running in three centres – Meath Gardens, Chrisp Street and John Smith.

The groups support children aged two to five with suspected autism or social communication difference. Feedback from families and professionals has been good, and the new sessions mean families can access support more quickly.

Therapists are also supporting Little Talkers sessions for children with speech, language and communication needs. These sessions run in all 12 centres.

The 2021 SEND inspection also raised issues with access to speech and language therapy treatment for three- to five-year-olds.

The council has agreed to fund more therapists to deliver better support for families.

There have been workforce challenges which has delayed launching the service, but the council are aiming to provide services from this spring.

# Youth Achievement Awards

The Youth Achievement Awards were held at Queen Mary University in December 2022. Organised by the Young Mayor's Team, Youth Council and supported by the Young People's Service, these awards are an opportunity to celebrate and recognise the commendable actions shown by young people in all areas of Tower Hamlets.

Awards are presented to young people who have overcome barriers and have shown commitment, improvement and passion in a particular area. Several members of the Our Time All Ability Youth Forum won awards for their work.

- **Sornnaly Hossain** won first place as Inspirational Young Leader for her work chairing the Our Time Forum. Sornnaly gave a powerful speech about the obstacles that she has managed to overcome
- **Yaomin Ali** won first place in the Group Youth Sports Award with the Tower Project Football Team
- **Yunus** won first place in a group category with the Solar Academy
- **Yasmin Nessa Awal** won second place in the Group Youth Arts Award with the Spotlight Drama.

**Well done to all the young people who won an award.**

To see video highlights of the award ceremony, and to see Sornnaly accept her award, visit <https://vimeo.com/780829671>

For more information, email [hasan.faruq@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:hasan.faruq@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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**The Youth Achievement Awards are all about celebrating the different ways in which our young people achieve so much for themselves, for their families and for our communities.**



James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture

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## SEND Support Group

- Come and meet other parents
- Share information
- Younger children welcome
- Monthly guest speakers

### For more information contact:

Tower Hamlets & City SEND IASS, 30 Greatorex Street, Whitechapel, London E1 5NP

☎ **020 7364 6489**

✉ **TowerHamlets&City.SENDIASS@towerhamlets.gov.uk**

✉ **@TH\_IASS**

🌐 **<https://www.towerhamletsandcitysendiass.com>**



## Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum



The Tower Hamlets Independent SEND Parent Forum is pan-disability. Members work with families and professionals from the council and health services to ensure the views of parents, carers and young people contribute to the design and delivery of services.

Join other parents and carers of children and young people with SEND (0-25 years) for coffee and talk about the issues that are important to you.

For more information, email [thesendforum@gmail.com](mailto:thesendforum@gmail.com), call 07498 573872  
[www.thsendforum.co.uk](http://www.thsendforum.co.uk)

## SEND workshops for parents

- **Education, Health and Care Plan Workshop**  
Tuesday 14 March, 4.30-6.30pm  
John Smith Children and Family Centre, E1
- **Annual Review Workshop**  
Wednesday 15 March, 10am-12noon  
Parent Advice Centre, E1

To book a place call 020 7364 6489 or email [towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:towerhamlets&city.sendiass@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

# Our Time Youth Forum



Our Time is an all-ability forum for young people with SEND. It was set up to make changes to the SEND support system and for members to meet new people and gain new experiences.

Joining is a great way to build confidence, find out more about SEND and promote inclusion for all young people. There are lots of opportunities for members, like becoming a volunteer,

attending events and even going on trips.

Our Time Forum meetings are held at Spotlight in Langdon Park on the third Thursday of each month.

To find out more, visit [www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/young\\_peoples\\_zone](http://www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/young_peoples_zone)

Below is some recent news from the forum.

## Disability Awareness fun day

The Disability Awareness fun day took place at Victoria Park in July, with the aim of promoting awareness of people with disabilities. It also provided an opportunity for people to connect with support services and engage with others who also have a disability.

Our Time members ran a stall where they promoted the forum. They also took part in activities like face painting, running, mini tennis, crafts and much more. It was a great way to explore and enjoy themselves – forum members felt it was a productive day.



## Mayor visits the Our Time All Ability Youth Forum



The Our Time All Ability Youth Forum is run for and by young people between the ages of 14-25 with SEND to ensure they can make their voices heard, gain new experiences, make friends, build confidence, understand their rights and campaign for change. Our Time regularly goes to meetings to share their views at a strategic level.

During November, Our Time met the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman. Before meeting the Mayor, Our Time discussed what they wanted to change in Tower Hamlets. The Mayor asked about what Our Time does and what they want to achieve and the young people shared their views about equality, opportunities and safety for young people with SEND.

Our Time shared their views at the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting about the planning and management of children and young people's services, with a round of applause at the end. They also attended the London Strategic Managers group to explain Our Time's work. They may even become consultants to other local authorities looking to set up their own SEND youth forums.

Young people can learn more about Our Time and join the forum by calling 020 7364 7127 or emailing [ourtime.yf@gmail.com](mailto:ourtime.yf@gmail.com).

# Let's Work SEND – jobs information fair

Let's Work is a unique event designed, developed and operated by young people with SEND. The event focuses on stimulating greater engagement between employers and young people.

Lets' Work enables young people with SEND to make better informed decisions about their futures and will convert engagement from the event into increased volunteering, work placement and paid employment opportunities.

The event is organised in partnership with The Tower Project JET Service, the council, Central London Careers Hub, and the Prince's Trust.

The organisers will be hosting a video CV workshop sharing top tips on how to create an engaging and professional short clip, which captures attendees skills, attributes and personality.



## LET'S WORK

A jobs information fair for all SEN Learners

Thursday 4 May 2023  
9:30am-3:00pm  
The Art Pavilion, Mile End Park,  
Clinton Road, E3 4QY

For more info contact: [events@letswork.org.uk](mailto:events@letswork.org.uk)



It is anticipated that Let's Work 2023 will be an essential date in the timetable for all young people with SEND aged 14-25 and parents and carers.

For more information or to book your place, email [events@letswork.org.uk](mailto:events@letswork.org.uk)



## Travel mentoring service for disabled passengers

Transport for London offers a free travel mentoring service for disabled passengers that aims to build confidence in using public transport.

The service may be useful for people who are reluctant to use public transport, but want to try it out, or people who have recently become disabled and want help navigating the network.

You can get help with:

- Planning an accessible route
- Making a journey
- Becoming an independent traveller
- Using mobility aids across the network
- Managing travel anxiety.

Find out more at <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/learn-to-use-public-transport>

## Premier League Kicks sessions

Young people with SEND can join free physical activity sessions with Premier League Kicks at Mile End Stadium. The sessions for eight to 18-year-olds are delivered in partnership with West Ham United Foundation and are a great way to get fit, unwind and meet friends in a safe environment.

Sessions take place at Mile End Stadium on Saturdays, 1-2pm.

For more details and to book your place, email [communitysport@westhamunited.co.uk](mailto:communitysport@westhamunited.co.uk)

