



# YOUNG TOWER HAMLETS STRATEGY 2025-2027





# CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Foreword by Mayor and Deputy Mayor</b>                  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Foreword by Young Mayor</b>                             | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Foreword by Corporate Director, Children's Services</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Context</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Our vision, our future</b>                              | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Shaping the strategy</b>                                | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Young Tower Hamlets delivery model</b>                  | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Building the infrastructure</b>                         | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Our delivery plan</b>                                   | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Looking forward</b>                                     | <b>42</b> |
| <b>References</b>  | <b>43</b> |
| <b>Appendix 1</b>  | <b>44</b> |
| <b>Appendix 2</b>  | <b>45</b> |

# FOREWORD BY MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

Tower Hamlets is investing in our next generation. As set out within the Tower Hamlets Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026<sup>1</sup> and the Youth Investment Report 2023<sup>2</sup>, the Council is significantly investing in our youth service and is transforming the level of support available for all young people in the borough.

We are committed to improving the lives of every young person in the borough. There have been significant challenges over recent years which we know have impacted our young people and we are determined not to leave any young person behind. That is why we want to do things differently going forward, to make sure that we have the infrastructure and resilience to support every young person as they move into adulthood regardless of the context.

We are proud to introduce the Young Tower Hamlets Strategy 2025-2027 and are grateful for all the hard work from the teams that have made this possible. This strategy sets out our forward thinking and ambitious plans to ensure all young people in the borough have access to a diverse and inclusive range of youth work opportunities and support through the delivery of a well-resourced and high-quality youth service. This includes:

- **Universal 'safe spaces' in every single ward** throughout the borough, where young people can participate in positive activities and educational opportunities, as well as access additional support from youth workers.
- **Targeted Youth Support** for vulnerable young people and those who need additional support.
- **Rapid Response Team** provide a preventative and responsive approach to harm outside the home.
- **Sport & Adventure Learning** team provide a range of outdoor adventurous activities and sports across the borough.
- **Youth Participation Team** seeks to empower children and young people to understand their rights and use their voice to drive positive change.
- **Commissioning** a mixed economy of **youth provision** for young people.

This strategy is driven by what young people, parents and carers have told us through our summer engagement events. All the ideas, opinions and challenges we have heard underpins this strategy, vision and action plan for delivery.

We know we can't do this on our own. We are listening, collaborating and working alongside our staff, partners and community to deliver upon our commitments to provide a modern youth service, whilst ensuring there are jobs for our residents.

*"As Mayor, I personally understand the value of youth services. As a child growing up in the borough, I regularly attended youth clubs where I played sports, did my homework and spent time with youth workers who mentored and supported me to study hard and go to university – I wouldn't be here now without them."*



**Executive Mayor  
Lutfur Rahman**

---



**Deputy Mayor and Lead  
Cabinet Member for  
Education, Youth and  
Lifelong Learning  
Maium Talukdar**

---

# FOREWORD BY YOUNG MAYOR

Having been a part of the youth engagement events that took place in summer 2023, where young people actively contributed to the design of our future youth offer for the borough - I am excited and pleased to present the Young Tower Hamlets Strategy 2025 – 2027.

The Young Tower Hamlets Strategy is a roadmap for changing youth services in the borough and has been designed by young people for young people.

This strategy lays the foundations for change and to tackle the big issues young people face in Tower Hamlets. It commits to having a safe space in every ward, as well as a new well-resourced workforce with highly skilled youth workers that will bring a positive impact to the lives of many young people in the borough.

Young people have already helped to design the Young Tower Hamlets branding and have set the priorities that we want from our youth offer which are:

- **Socialising** – offering a safe and supportive environment for young people to make friends and to build relationships.
- **Having fun** – creating access to a variety of activities designed to be fun and engaging, allowing young people to relax and destress.
- **Learning new things** – making available a variety of programmes and activities that help young people learn new skills, whether life skills, creative activities or sports.
- **Helping the community** – providing opportunities to develop a sense of civic responsibility and to make a positive difference in the world.

This strategy is our pledge and commitment to all young people in the borough that we will create a youth service where every young person can thrive, discover their potential and achieve success.



Young Mayor  
Fetuma Hassan

# FOREWORD BY CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Tower Hamlets is a wonderful borough full of history, culture and diversity, and is also a place where our incredible children and young people have so much potential.

The council is investing significantly in our children, young people and their families, including a ground-breaking level of investment into our youth services, to ensure they can thrive and have the best possible life chances.

Crucially this strategy and its priorities have been shaped by our young people, and they will ensure the council, and the key partners we work with, are held to account to deliver on it.

I have been so impressed by our teams in Young Tower Hamlets who, even in the short period they have been operating, have already made a huge difference to lives of the many children and families they have worked with.

I am very proud to work for a council that is investing so significantly in our future citizens, some who I have no doubt will be future leaders, and proud that we are genuinely listening to our children and young people and designing services and solutions in partnership with them.



Corporate Director  
Children's Services  
**Steve Reddy**

# CONTEXT



**58%** of children are from a Bangladeshi background



There were **64,200** 0-17-year-olds in 2021, increase of 8,855 between 2011 and 2021



**27%** of children live in relatively low income families (**50%** when including housing costs)



**95.7%** of our state schools are judged either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted



**68.6%** of pupils achieved grade 4+ in GCSE England in Maths (2023-24)



NEET rate for young people aged 16+ is **6.3%**, with economic inactivity at **28.9%**



**73%** of primary pupils and **63%** of secondary pupils feel safe in their local areas



There has been approx. **40%** reduction in children entering the criminal justice system



**190,000** young people were out of work due to ill health in 2024



The highest categorised health need is autism and over **50%** of households are low-income families.

Our Young Tower Hamlets Strategy aims to set out our vision, ambitions, and commitment to creating a modern and transformed youth service. A new youth service that meets the diverse needs of Tower Hamlets next generation enabling them to thrive and enjoy a positive transition into adulthood.

Tower Hamlets is one of the UK's most diverse and culturally vibrant communities. 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.

The need for an increased youth offer is growing. Demand for services for young people has increased dramatically through the pandemic and has been exacerbated even further in the face of the cost-of-living crisis. This is in the context of being the most densely populated area in the UK, with the 4th youngest population and with 1 in 4 children (27%) living in relatively low-income families, which rises to around 1 in 2 children when housing costs are taken into account.

There were 64,200 0-17- year-olds in 2021, that is 21% of the population, and an increase of 8,855 between 2011 and 2021. There are high levels of child poverty as well as overcrowding amongst families with dependent children. These factors have a negative impact on many aspects of children's lives such as health, study, socialisation and friendships.

95.7% of our state schools in the borough are judged either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted (August 2024, gov.uk). In 2023/24, 68.6% of pupils achieved grade 4+ in GCSE English and Maths, 3.6% higher than the National average of 65.4%, however slightly lower than the inner London average of 70.7% (DfE EES, March 2025). At grade 5+ in GCSE English and Maths, 51.6% of pupils in Tower Hamlets achieved this outcome, 5.4% above the National average of 46.2%, however 2.1% less than the inner London average of 53.2% (DfE EES, March 2025). The 2024 Pupil Attitude Survey showed 73% of primary pupils felt safe in their local areas compared to 63% of secondary pupils. In addition, there has been approximately a 40% reduction in children entering the criminal justice system (First Time Entrants (FTE) in the last two years.

Whilst Tower Hamlets has achieved its lowest ever NEET figure of 3.3% for 16–19-year-olds in 2024-25, Tower Hamlets NEET rate for young people aged 16 and over was 6.3%, with economic inactivity at 28.9%, above the national and London averages. Poor mental health is a major barrier to employment across the UK, with 190,000 young people out of work due to ill health in 2024.

Being NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) has significant long-term impacts on young people. They face higher risks of poor physical and mental health, including increased hospitalisation and use of mental health medications. Financially, extended unemployment leads to lower lifetime earnings and higher chances of future unemployment or low-quality work, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion. Early intervention and support are crucial to mitigate these effects.

To inform our new youth delivery model we have taken an evidence-based approach by undertaking a comprehensive needs assessment of the borough. The needs assessment determines the needs of young people, the gaps and the outcomes we want to achieve at borough-wide and ward level. The below presents the key findings at a borough-wide level, gleaned from the Young Tower Hamlets Needs Assessment 2023.

The key findings from the needs assessment highlights that Tower Hamlets has the highest youth population in London and the highest population density for a London borough. The highest categorised health need is autism and over 50% of households are low-income families. Our needs assessment supports the design and development of the service offer across the whole of the Young Tower Hamlets model.

The Young Tower Hamlets Needs Assessment, alongside the Designing a Future Youth Offer for Tower Hamlets, and a comprehensive engagement consultation (see Shaping the Strategy section below for details of the hackathon) with 1,580 young people and parents throughout 2023/2024 provides a wide ranging and robust evidence-based foundation upon which this strategy and the redesigned Young Tower Hamlets service have been shaped and resourced.



# OUR VISION, OUR FUTURE

Our vision supports and aligns with the commitments of Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup> and aims to deliver against the following TH strategic priorities: accelerate education, boost culture, business, jobs and leisure, invest in public services, empower communities and fight crime; and a council that works and listens to you.

Through listening to staff, young people and parents, as well as taking the learning from what we already know; together we have created a shared vision for Young Tower Hamlets. This is a vision that belongs to all of us and will take us all to deliver it.

## Discovering potential, achieving success

**Our vision statement for Tower Hamlets is that all young people are provided with inspiring opportunities, exciting activities, and tailored support regardless of background; enabling them to discover their full potential, transform our community and to become the next generation of success stories.**

For us to deliver our vision, the ambitions are clear. We aim to have the best youth service in London if not the country. We will ensure all young people have access to a diverse range of youth work opportunities and support through the delivery of a high-quality youth service. This includes the following priority areas:



### **Universal Safe Spaces**



### **Rapid Response Team (detached youth work)**



### **Targeted Youth Support**



### **Sports and Adventure Learning**



### **Youth Participation**



### **Mayors Small Grants and Commissioning**



### **Diverse, skilled and qualified workforce**

Our vision is underpinned by a theory of change (Appendix 1). Our theory of change provides a framework and evidence-based approach to our service delivery and will be used by leaders and practitioners to deliver high-quality youth work.

To deliver our vision, and for young people to discover their potential and achieve success requires tangible change through the actions and outcomes set out in this strategy. By working together in collaboration with children, families, partners, voluntary and community groups, and local businesses we will ensure that the changes we make are sustainable and will improve the lives for our future generations.

Alongside statutory provisions, universal youth services, sports activities and learning, young people will be given access to careers guidance, resilience skills, work experience and apprenticeship opportunities; with staff and employer partners and local FE and HE providers all supporting a scheduled programme of events and opportunities.

This strategy complements and contributes into several other key strategies at a national and local level such as the National Youth Agency Strategy 2024-2029<sup>4</sup> Youth Work in Every Place and Space, Children and Young Peoples Plan (This is Accelerate)<sup>5</sup>, Serious Violence and Exploitation Strategy

2024<sup>6</sup> (themes 1 and 2; Early intervention and creating safe spaces), Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy<sup>7</sup>, Our Commitment to Carers 2024-27<sup>8</sup> (priority to identify and expand support to young carers), Tower Hamlets Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion Strategy<sup>9</sup> (priority 6; Children and young people with SEND and neurodiversity are valued, celebrated and supported to thrive), Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Strategy<sup>10</sup> (priorities 2 and 5; Trusted and strong relationships, and co-production), Tower Hamlets Early Help 2025-2028<sup>11</sup> and Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-2025.

The key priorities of the Tower Hamlets Children and Families Partnership Strategy – Th.ls Accelerate will be supported by this strategy, particularly the following priorities:

- 3 - Get support for good mental health and wellbeing when they need it
- 5 – Feel safe and secure
- 6 - Achieve their best in education and have opportunities to develop a career
- 8 - Champion co-production, equality, and anti-racism



**“It gives the children a purpose. A good mentor in life is very important in the early stages. The children need help in realising the potential they have.”**

Parent

# SHAPING THE STRATEGY

We have been shaping our thinking over the past couple of years with young people, their parents and those who know them. This strategy has been developed through a comprehensive engagement consultation of the needs, preferences, ideas and ambitions of young people throughout 2023/2024, culminating in the Designing a Future Youth Offer for Tower Hamlets report.

The engagement consultation included large-scale surveys, workshops, focus groups, interviews, film projects and events. The areas that the engagement covered were:

- **Needs and want from their youth centre**
  - Creating a modern youth service offer
- **Youth voices, youth choice** - Co-design brand identity and logo for the new youth service
- **Seeing the Future** - Designing a new youth service in the metaverse.

All aspects of the process of the engagement consultation were informed by youth work principles including anti-racism, participation, quality and empowerment. Young people were involved in the design and delivery of each activity. The engagement consultation consisted of:

- **An online survey of young people, 940 responses**, through schools, youth providers, social media, residents, and partner organisations.
- **An online survey of parents, 170 responses**, through community networks, parent groups, council services, and digital channels.
- Four large-scale Summer 'hackathon' events engaging 400 young people, in partnership with Spotlight, Osmani Trust and George Green School, featuring interactive workshops, co-design sessions, competitions, and activity tasters.
- **A film peer action research project involving 20 young people**, where young people are trained to investigate other young people's needs using journalism techniques with a professional media company.
- **Four targeted Autumn 'hackathon' session for specific groups**, including Somali boys, girls, SEND young people (up to the age of 25), and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+, contributing to the design and vision of a future youth service tailored to their unique needs.

As part of the engagement consultation young people were trained up to be documentary journalists and then interviewed their peers on camera about their needs and ideas for a future youth service. The findings formed a film project as part of the hackathon feedback.<sup>12</sup>

The findings from the engagement consultation provides a clear evidence-base which is aligned with the needs of the borough and aspirations from the young people, which has been firmly embedded into this strategy.



---

**“It needs to be local to my home. I don’t want my son to travel across the borough to attend a ‘hub’ and would prefer lots of smaller locations spread across the borough e.g. based in community centres and estate community halls.”**

Parent

# YOUNG TOWER HAMLETS DELIVERY MODEL

## Overview of services

Young Tower Hamlets ensures that all young people have equitable access to a youth service that meets their needs today and in the future. This is made up of a multi-model approach to delivery through place-based, whole family and outreach. The service comprises of six core elements of youth engagement services to support young people on their journey through to adulthood. The below reflects the services that make up Young Tower Hamlets:



Universal Safe Spaces



Rapid Response Team (detached youth work)



Targeted Youth Support



Sports and Adventure Learning



Youth Participation



Mayors Small Grants and Commissioning



## Universal safe spaces delivery offer

Our universal youth work will be accessible to all young people. There will be a 'safe space' in every ward throughout the borough delivering free universal youth provision across afternoons, evenings and throughout the school holidays, all year round. Our centres are for young people aged between 11–19, and up to 25 for those with SEND.

Young people have said that universal provision is extremely important to them. They provide an opportunity for young people to meet in dedicated youth spaces with other young people from different backgrounds and needs, as well as opportunities to access support and participate in activities which support their personal, social, educational and emotional development.

Our youth centres are inclusive, accessible and a place where all young people are made to feel welcome. Our centres have a progressive youth work offer of engaging, positive and educational activities which are delivered by highly skilled youth workers, providing opportunities to gain new experiences and skills that they may not be able to access without Young Tower Hamlets.

We recognise that some young people will need additional support or be more vulnerable due to circumstances and challenges in their life. To support these young people our youth workers are trained to provide a range of inclusive activities, working in collaboration with targeted services towards any support plan.

### Our Commitments:

- To remove barriers, to work with, support and engage vulnerable or marginalised groups, including Young Carers, Care Leavers, those with SEND, refugees/asylum seekers into positive activities and access to safe spaces.
- We will invest in our youth facilities to have a safe space in every ward for young people to socialise, make friends and build relationships.
- We will deliver youth sessions in each ward providing a variety of engaging and fun activities as well as learning new skills.
- Deliver holiday programmes throughout the year.
- Ensure young people have access to trusted adults including youth workers, mentors or other professionals.



**“It’s pretty fun. There’s lot lots of activities around here. Most of the time I’m using the studio as I’m a singer and DJ, but at times I would also ask to go and bake, because I’m a baker as well.”**

Young person



## Rapid Response Team (Integrated Detached) offer

The Young Tower Hamlets Rapid Response Team (formerly Integrated Detached) provides preventative responses through detached youth work in locations of risk across the borough. The team aims to reduce the risk of exploitation and harm to young people and to make spaces and places safer for young people in the community.

The Rapid Response Team are primarily, but not exclusively, delivering street-based youth work in settings such as parks, shops, take-away premises, transport hubs, schools and hospitals. Based on information from a range of sources, including intelligence meetings and information-sharing alongside partners, this specialist team undertake locality risk assessments around 'hotspot' areas and work closely with the police, Community Safety, THEOs, local businesses and voluntary groups to make the area safer.

The team provides access to a youth engagement service, which is open to all young people, working across a diverse set of needs and issues. The relationships

that the team develop with young people provide the bridge to essential services such as universal youth centres, education training and employment, alcohol and drug support, as well as emotional wellbeing and mental health services.

The Rapid Response Team's core operating hours will align with the data and evidence that serious incidents take place around this time, as well as operating flexibility outside the core operating hours informed by partnership information and intelligence to deliver youth work in a safe, planned and coordinated way.

### Our Commitments:

- To make young people feel safer in the borough.
- To reduce exposure to harm outside the home.
- To signpost young people to specialist support when needed.
- Work in partnership with schools to build relationships with young people.



**“A young person knows that if they've got somewhere where they feel comfortable and they've got somewhere that they're going to enjoy themselves, they're going to want to come.”**

Young person



## Targeted Youth Support

Young Tower Hamlets Targeted Youth Support offers specific tailored interventions aimed at young people and their families who need extra provision on top of universally provided services, to help ensure that the unmet needs of young people are identified at the earliest opportunity and given support and skills to thrive in both the short and long-term.

The team receive referrals via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team (MAST) and provide interventions in collaboration with multi-agency partners to improve outcomes for children and families within the borough. This often means working with young people who may not meet traditional thresholds for statutory or specialist services, but who, without help, are at risk of poor outcomes.

The offer of the targeted youth support teams includes completing Early Help assessments and one to one targeted interventions from a named case worker for young people aged between 11–19, and up to 25 for those with SEND requiring additional support. The service is for young people who require specific support within the family context at level 2 (as per the national continuum of need), as well as those on Children in Need and Child Protection Plans. Interventions will take place within the family context and where direct work cannot be provided by the practitioner, the family members will be signposted to relevant services for support.

The team provide a strong emphasis on community-based delivery, by going to the young person or providing support within community settings such as youth centres, schools, family home and other community venues. Our team are persistent with their person-centred approach to building meaningful relationships over time for the young person to engage with their practitioner.

Some of the key areas of work the service provides are:



### **Our Commitments:**

- Provide support to young people and their families to thrive.
- Divert young people away from re-entering statutory services.
- Reduce harm outside the home.
- Improve school engagement and behaviour.



## Sports and Adventure Learning

The Team provides a borough wide sport and outdoor education offer to all young people in the borough. Operating from the Urban Adventure Base in Mile End, as well as delivering in settings such as community sports clubs, schools and youth centres across the borough.

The development and delivery of an engaging sport-based youth work curriculum to ensure that more young people realise the benefits of taking part in sport and physical activity as part of their development and outcomes.

A range of activities for young people to engage with which are educational, accredited and adventurous. The below is our core offer:

- Delivering inclusive cycling sessions, GCSE Climbing, transition activity days and community groups accessing on-site gyms across primary and secondary schools in the borough.
- The Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award is available to all Secondary Schools. The DofE enrolls over 1,000 young people per year offering specialist support both to complete the Expedition section, and either a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.
- Open-Access Youth sessions five nights per week, which offer a balanced programme of progressive sports and physical activity as well as issue-based

workshops and support from qualified youth workers.

- Half-term and summer programme, which is in high demand and offers exciting activities and food for young people.
- Programme of sport coaching to school children in the borough, focused on different sporting activities and support talent pathways opportunities.

Our offer is accessible to a diverse range of young people, providing high-quality and inclusive sports coaching to young people with varying abilities, skills and needs.

### Our Commitments:

- To increase our offer of accreditation via the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Sports Leaders UK, ASDAN Short Courses and other National Governing Body qualifications.
- Greater offer of extra-curricular sports and activities working with Primary and Secondary Schools.
- A dedicated team supporting with quality off-site visits and adventure education across Young Tower Hamlets.
- To increase physical activity through a range of sports and activities.



**“I feel like youth centres should promote more free activities or residentials or things that are in trend. For example, right now it’s summertime, so I think that they should provide biking sessions or water fights - even if it may seem as if it’s not that useful, it will bring people together.”**

Young person



## Youth Engagement and Participation

Our Youth Participation work in children's services champions the rights of young people and delivers a wide-ranging participation offer across the borough. It is at the heart of empowering and supporting young people to drive positive change regarding issues and ideas that are important to them, as well as ensuring these views are amplified and meaningfully acted upon, especially in the context of policies, service design and practice.

Working in partnership with young people, we have created and established many different participation forums where young people come together to discuss key topics. The following groups are in place:

**Young Mayor**

**Youth Council**

**Participation Forum**  
**(SEND Forum, Youth Empowerment Board & Children Living in Care Council (CLICC)**

**Active Young People**

**Friends and Family Group**  
**(FGC Service)**

**Quality Assurance**  
**(feedback from families)**

Through the youth engagement consultation and feedback from the established participation forums, young people have told us they have five new areas that matter to them the most in relation to their new youth provision, whether that is in our universal settings, on the streets via our detached and targeted teams, or delivered through our partnership providers, they wish for us to be:

- **Child-Centred:** Honest, compassionate and respectful to each other, to young people and their families.
- **Respect:** Being professional, positive, and respectful at all times.
- **Safety:** Proactive support to ensure policies are being followed.
- **Compassionate:** Give each other time for reflection and actively listening to our challenges.
- **Excellence and Quality:** To keep the child's voice at the centre of all the work we do.

It's clear from young people's feedback that we need to continue to build on our current engagement, participation and co-production approach and to develop it even further, ensuring their voices are central and influence everything we do that either involves young people or affects them, especially around the co-design and shaping of our future youth offer.

## Our Commitments:

- Creation of a Council-wide youth participation strategy and guide to ensure participation is meaningful and effective.
- Implement the Hear by Rights and the Lundy model for our participation delivery offer.
- Work in a coproduction culture.
- Ensure that children, young people, and their families are meaningfully involved in the governance of services that affects them.
- Strengthen the cycle of feedback sharing what is changed as a result of their input.



## **Mayor's Small Grants and commissioning**

To deliver our vision and ambitions comes down to all of us. We all have a responsibility for the children in the borough to achieve success. To do this, the mayor is investing in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in a range of different ways:

**Youth Empowerment Fund**

**Positive Activities for Young People Fund**

**Delivering in partnership universal youth work**

**Commissioning specialist youth provision**

**“Being culturally sensitive and having special provision for those with additional needs to help them develop their skills.”**

Parent

The Youth Empowerment Fund is youth-led. It supports the empowerment of young people aged 11-19 years old (extending up to 25 years old for young people with special educational needs or disabilities and young people leaving care). The aim is for young people to design, deliver and evaluate projects that are beneficial to them and other young people in the community.

The Mayors Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) grant funding programme aims to support voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver a range of positive activities and experiences during school holiday periods for young people aged 11-19 years old (extending up to 25 years old for young people with special educational needs or disabilities and young people leaving care). This contributes towards providing young people in the borough:

- With somewhere safe to go.
- Something positive to do.
- Someone to talk with during school holiday periods.

Our vision is to support and invest in a thriving and diverse VCFS to enable them to improve outcomes for Tower Hamlets young people. We will be doing this by investing in a mixed economy model for universal delivery in partnership with VCFS providers to deliver a variety of activities, events, accredited programmes, trips and lots more.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that all services provided as part of the Young Tower Hamlets offer are inclusive to meet the diverse needs of all Tower Hamlets young people. We currently commission a specialist service offer to effectively meet the needs of the youth population e.g., LGBTQIA+, SEND, mental health, Somali young people, and young carers to name a few.

### **Our Commitments:**

- To commission the voluntary and community sector to deliver in partnership a diverse and inclusive range of universal and specialist youth work provision to young people in the borough.
- To support and empower young people to submit applications for grants and funds e.g. Youth Empowerment Fund.
- Support voluntary and community sector in applying for the Positive Activities for Young People's grant.

## Working in partnership

Partnership working is at the heart of youth work delivery. We have a strong partnership commitment which is underpinned by our joint Tower Hamlets Children's and Families Partnership Strategy 2023-2028.

Only together as a partnership can we achieve our ambitions. The Council has strong internal and external partnerships across several service areas such as schools, Community Safety, health, leisure, libraries as well as VCS and faith groups. These partnerships ensure that we are maximizing our potential and ensure that young people have access to safe spaces across the borough as well as access to trusted adults.

Young Tower Hamlets is working with a number of internal and external partners including VCFS organisations, Pan London Network, National Youth Agency, DCMS, Schools, Workpath, Family Support, Education, Community Safety, BeWell, CAMHs, Canary Wharf, British Cycling, DofE Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme.

There will be exploration of different partnership arrangements such as consortium, alliance, or summit which may improve our working model of partnership delivery.

Going forward, there is a need to further strengthen our partnership offer and be proactive with partners from various sectors including the VCS, faith groups, education and health sector around responding to emerging themes and to create opportunities for further youth work collaboration as well as in our workforce development space.

### Our Commitments:

- To develop a Young Tower Hamlets partnership offer.
- Establish a proactive youth sector partnership, responding to emerging themes (e.g., NEET, harm outside the home etc.)
- Create opportunities for further youth work collaboration and workforce development.
- Develop a best practice youth service and use this to establish Tower Hamlets as a strong regional and national partner.



**“There is a correlation between education, schools, opportunities and youth services. Young Tower Hamlets will provide excellent opportunities alongside a safe space for every young person in the borough, to improve their life chances.”**

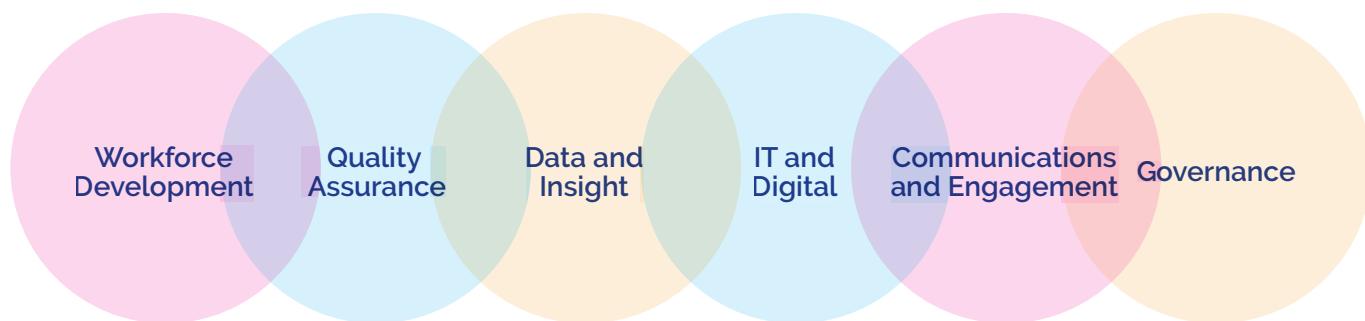
Mayor of Tower Hamlets

# BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

## A sustainable model

To achieve our vision, we need a sustainable model for the delivery of youth work. A model that is based on a clear understanding of the culture, resources, skills and opportunities available to us and there must be accountability with clear expectations for delivery at all levels.

We want to know whether our services are making a difference and are benefitting the lives of young people. It is vitally important that we have insight into the services we are delivering. We will do this by ensuring the following is in place:



Having this crucial infrastructure in place will enable us to be at the forefront of driving excellence in the quality of youth work practice and the positive difference it can make to young people as part of their transition into adulthood.

We will continue to be driven by the Tower Hamlets values to shape our culture, behaviour, decisions and actions within our workforce in line with the wider Council.

The National Youth Agency (NYA) has published *How to fulfil your Statutory Duty*<sup>13</sup>, a self-assessment and toolkit to support Local Authorities and their partners to meet or exceed the national minimum standards in England.

We will be adopting this framework and using it to underpin our core operating model. For us it will provide a roadmap and supporting tools for us to develop a strong local ecosystem of youth work provision. We will use this to form the basis of our new workforce development plan, to ensure we invest in and secure the right mix of workers to meet the needs of young people, as one of the nine 'essentials' of a local youth offer.

## Tower values

Our TOWER Values shape everything we do – They guide how we work together, serve our communities, and strive for excellence.

Think about how you can actively demonstrate the TOWER Values in your day-to-day work.

Every interaction is an opportunity to live our values and make a meaningful difference.



### TOGETHER

We work TOGETHER across boundaries and with partners to achieve the best outcomes for Tower Hamlets



### OPEN

We are OPEN and transparent



### WILLING

We are WILLING to challenge, innovate and be accountable



### EXCELLENT

We empower each other to be EXCELLENT and go the extra mile



### RESPECT

We RESPECT all communities, they are the heart of everything we do

Every action you take, guided by our TOWER values, helps us serve residents with pride, purpose, and respect.

## Building a diverse, skilled and qualified workforce

We will create a diverse, skilled, and qualified workforce. A workforce that reflects the community and builds meaningful relationships with young people enabling them to explore their personal, social, and educational development.

We will develop a workforce development strategy and plan that will underpin efficient, high-quality and sustainable youth work delivery. It will use the following guiding principles:

- **Attract:** Drive sufficiency and supply
- **Develop:** Empower and develop talent
- **Retain:** Ambitious offer and increased stability
- **Inspire:** Strengthen and model leadership at all levels
- **Include:** Tackling racism and disproportionality

Our core belief is that we want to create a pro-active and professional culture that values local knowledge and a positive attitude as much as formal qualifications. We will have a full training offer for our permanent and agency staff, apprenticeships, VCFS, volunteers and sessional workers. Our continuous learning culture and growth mindset approach will ensure that we will always 'recruit for attitude and train for skills'.

## Quality Assurance

The youth service will have an embedded quality assurance framework at all levels that recognises and enables the continuous improvement of excellent youth work practice. Our quality assurance framework will be based on The National Occupational Standards for youth work and will provide the starting point to develop the standards and indicators.

The quality assurance framework and related activities will ensure the quality of youth work delivery is consistently good across all deliverables as well as driving excellence. Our quality assurance framework will include all the Young Tower Hamlets delivery elements including that of our commissioned partners.

Our quality assurance framework and quality indicators will complement the Supporting Families Learning Academy as part of a whole division approach to quality assurance which will include practice observations, feedback from young people, parents and carers, case file audits and the production of reports.

We will work towards achieving externally validated quality marks such as those developed by the National Youth Agency. This will support us to reflect upon and review the services we provide to young people and provide youth work to the best possible standard.

We will work with young people to design how they would like to be a part of the quality assurance process whether that is undertaking spot checks along with our quality assurance offers, becoming a young inspector or providing feedback on their experience when engaging with our service offer.

## **Data and insight**

An integral part of our service development is to know how our service is performing. We will be developing a suite of performance and management information dashboards, collecting insights from young people, families, partners as well as the workforce to analyse what is working well, our areas for improvement and report on the findings. This provides management and operations teams with information at a strategic and operational level around reach, delivery and impact.

Forming part of this strategy and complementing our Theory of Change, an outcomes framework has been developed (Appendix 2). The outcomes framework provides a shift towards evidence-based practice, include measures for each indicator as well as providing the framework for monitoring, evaluation and impact of our intended outcomes.

## **Our Youth Work Curriculum**

At the heart of our offer will be the Tower Hamlets Youth Work Curriculum. This will be informed by the National Youth Agency (NYA) Youth Work Curriculum Framework for England<sup>14</sup> and will be tailored and co-produced to specifically reflect the local context and needs of the Tower Hamlets youth population.

The Youth Work Curriculum provides a standardised approach to youth work practice and delivery and will set out the educational process that underpins excellent quality youth work. It is not a dictated set of subjects or a syllabus, but rather a framework to support and develop practices that are a catalyst for young people's learning and development. Our aim is to implement the curriculum framework across all of Young Tower Hamlets delivery model and will require a coordinated approach and collaboration with young people, internal and external partners, communities and our commissioned partners.

## **IT and digital**

IT and digital technology are a key driving force in our service transformation to ensure that young people have access to ICT devices such as, laptops, desktop computers, music production and podcasting equipment to support with their learning, education and employment.

We are investing in our software solution and will be engaging with Young Tower Hamlets staff, commissioned providers and young people to ensure it meets their needs. The new solution will support teams to spend more time and interaction with young people by simplifying the recording of information, streamlining processes, enable data teams to easily report from the solution and leaders to have line of sight.

## Communications and engagement

The new youth service underwent a complete rebrand using the feedback provided in hackathons and surveys with young people. This brand has become visually recognisable across the borough through campaigns which have utilised posters, leaflets, banners, signage, branded items and more.

Following feedback from young people on the council's corporate social media channels, the communications team has developed a social media strategy and launched new YTH social media platforms, including TikTok and Instagram, which appeal more to a younger audience. To date, we have had 1.8 million video views on our YTH TikTok.

In August 2024, we launched the Young Tower Hamlets website, which provides a dedicated space to list events, information and advice for young people. Young people participated in the development and design

of the website, including focus groups and user testing. Visits to the website are growing exponentially each month.

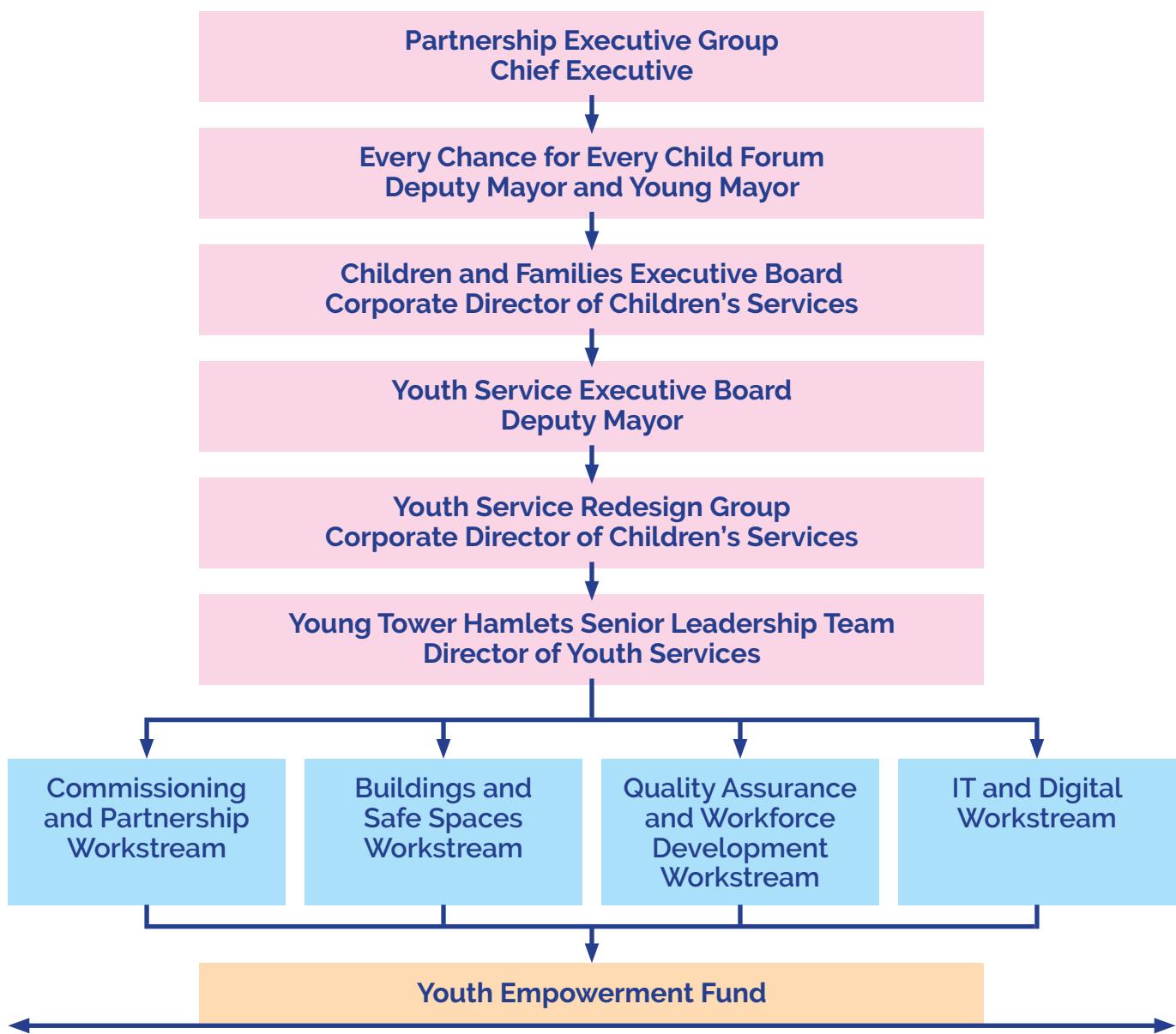
These new channels have been developed specifically for young people, to increase their knowledge and awareness of our youth offer, with content that is engaging for a younger audience. There has been ongoing engagement and feedback with young people, via the Youth Council and Young Ambassadors programme. We will continue to work with young people to ensure content is relevant and engaging for this audience.

A communications strategy has been in place, and we will be working towards developing a new communications strategy to align with this service strategy. This will outline key communications activity that will support the service to meet their objectives as well as:

- How we will keep stakeholder and service users informed and promote opportunities
- How we will continue to grow the audience of our digital channels
- Work with the service to identify any communications campaigns where we can influence behaviour change
- Continue to support young people to get involved in content creation.

## Governance and monitoring

Transparency, accountability and evidence are key to delivering a successful youth service. Enabling continued dialogue, collaboration and decision making with internal and external stakeholders is essential to ensuring our actions are taken forward in a meaningful and sustainable way. The below sets out the governance structure that is overseeing the transformation:



The governance comprises of two boards and four workstreams that provides strategic and operational governance. The membership of these boards and workstreams is diverse and comprehensive to ensure there is effective accountability and scrutiny in place. Representation across the governance arrangements include Finance, HR, Legal, Communications, Property, Facilities Management, IT and Young Tower Hamlets. The governance is informed by the voice of young people to ensure that the services are centred around their needs.

All related governance boards meet monthly except for the Youth Service Redesign Executive Board who meet every other month. All meetings are documented to ensure that decisions and actions are clearly recorded. The transformation programme and operational delivery will be subject to internal audit reviews. These will happen periodically throughout the year providing support and assurance around governance, systems, and processes.

The service has the following service governance in place:

| Group                        | Aim   | Frequency   | Chair             |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Service Meeting</b>       | To translate the vision and strategic direction into operational frontline delivery, ensure key messages are communicated across the division, share good practice and knowledge sharing (e.g. service offer, training etc) | Quarterly   | Director of Youth |
| <b>YTH Managers Meetings</b> | To ensure there is strategic alignment across all services, workforce matters at a service or individual level. This will also include a focus on HR, Finance, Health and Safety.   | Fortnightly | Head of Service   |
| <b>Team Meetings</b>         | Group Manager leading discussions with their team to cascade key messages, present service performance, quality assurance, timetable/rotas to ensure there is an effective service offer in place.                          | Fortnightly | Group Managers    |

## Our Commitments:

- To create and implement a new workforce development strategy and action plan to ensure the workforce is skilled and trained to deliver high-quality youth work practice.
- To develop and implement a quality assurance framework that spans the whole of the youth offer and complements the Learning Academy quality assurance framework.
- Work towards gaining Quality Mark status as we develop the service ensuring there are clear policies, guidance, and evidence to support youth work delivery.
- Development of our youth work curriculum.
- Development of a suite of performance and management information dashboards to support service improvement and decision-making.
- Procurement of a new data management software solution that is current and is easy for young people, partners, and staff to use.
- Six-month review of the governance as the service scales up and moves into operational delivery.
- Ensure our safety and inclusivity across the service.

# OUR DELIVERY PLAN

We will be rolling out and embedding our high-level delivery plan that sets out the tasks over the next 24 months. There is a more detailed plan that sits beneath this which is being developed and is informed by our self-assessment. The below highlights actions for year one.

## Delivery model

| Priority Areas                       | Actions in Year one   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Universal Safe Spaces</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify and open youth facilities 'safe spaces' in every ward.</li><li>A consistent youth offer in each ward.</li><li>Delivery of positive activities to marginalised groups with access to safe spaces.</li><li>Holiday programmes delivered throughout the year.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Rapid Response Team</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Define the operating model of the new service.</li><li>Develop the new operating procedures.</li><li>Recruit specialist skilled detached youth workers and relaunch the service</li></ul>   |
| <b>Targeted Youth support</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Define the core offer for children aged 11+ that require additional level 1 support.</li><li>All young people without a statutory assessment will have an Early Help Assessment completed to identify emerging challenges and unmet needs in individual children and families, particularly those facing complex issues.</li><li>Work with MAST to strengthen our referral pathway.</li><li>Strengthen our partnership with key internal and external partners to ensure smooth transition of step up and step-down cases (Transfer list meeting, YJS and SIP).</li><li>All young people to have a plan/risk assessment in place with a strong emphasis on the child's voice.</li><li>Implementation of the new audit tool for TYS</li><li>Focus on building the young person's resilience, strengthening family networks, and fostering connections within the local community, where it is safe to do so.</li></ul> |
| <b>Sports and Adventure Learning</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work with the DofE on strengthening the offer across the borough.</li><li>Increase accreditation offer.</li><li>Greater offer of extra-curricular sports and activities working with Primary, Secondary Schools and youth centres.</li></ul>  |

| Priority Areas                               | Actions in Year one  |
|--|--|
| <b>Youth Participation</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a youth participation guide to ensure participation is meaningful and effective not only across Young Tower Hamlets, but across the whole of the Children's Services division.</li> <li>Work towards implementing the Hear by Rights and the Lundy model for our participation delivery offer.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Mayors Small Grants and Commissioning</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To commission the voluntary and community sector to deliver in partnership with Young Tower Hamlets a diverse and inclusive range of universal and specialist youth work provision to young people in the borough.</li> <li>To support and empower young people to submit applications for the Youth Empowerment Fund.</li> <li>Encourage voluntary and community sector in applying for Positive Activities for Young People grant.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Working in partnership</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop a Young Tower Hamlets partnership offer.</li> <li>Create opportunities for further youth sector collaboration and workforce development.</li> <li>Exploration of different partnership arrangements e.g., alliance, consortium, summits, forums, boards etc.</li> </ul>  |

## Building the Infrastructure

| Priority Areas                                  | Actions in Year one   |
|---|---|
| <b>Diverse, skilled and qualified workforce</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and implement a new workforce development strategy and action plan to ensure the workforce is skilled, trained and reflects the community to deliver high-quality youth work practice.</li> <li>Large-scale recruitment campaign to attract youth workers into posts.</li> <li>Undertake a skills audit to inform the 2025/6 training programme.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>High Quality Youth Work</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake the NYA self-assessment and develop a delivery plan that sets out the service improvement required.</li> <li>Develop and implement a quality assurance framework that spans the whole of the youth offer and complements the Learning Academy quality assurance framework.</li> <li>Development of policies, procedures and guidance to support our practice.</li> <li>Development of a suite of performance and management information dashboards to support service improvement and decision-making.</li> <li>Re-procurement of a new software solution.</li> <li>Development of our youth work curriculum for both youth and sports.</li> </ul> |

# LOOKING FORWARD

This is our first Young Tower Hamlets Strategy and purposely developed to be a short strategy that focuses on setting up the foundations and infrastructure so that the youth service delivery is built on solid ground.

We will be commissioning an external review of our Young Tower Hamlets model. This will be an external evaluation of our structure, processes, effectiveness and impact of the model and will be taking the learning forward into our next strategy as well as ensuring we have a sustainable model for the future.

Our next strategy aims to be more detailed, setting out our ambitions over the following 3-5-year period as well as taking in to account the Government's developing National Youth Strategy, Young Futures Hubs pilots, Youth Guarantee, Local Prevention Partnerships and Children's Social Care Reforms. Our strategy will be developed in collaboration with staff, partners and community groups, as well as young people and their parents/carers. The consultation will be starting in 2026-27.



# REFERENCES

- 1 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Strategy-and-performance/Tower-Hamlets-Council-Strategic-Plan-2022-2026.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Strategy-and-performance/Tower-Hamlets-Council-Strategic-Plan-2022-2026.pdf)
- 2 [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s216102/Youth%20Investment%20Report.pdf](http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s216102/Youth%20Investment%20Report.pdf)
- 3 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Strategy-and-performance/Tower-Hamlets-Council-Strategic-Plan-2022-2026.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Strategy-and-performance/Tower-Hamlets-Council-Strategic-Plan-2022-2026.pdf)
- 4 [nya.org.uk/our-strategy](http://nya.org.uk/our-strategy)
- 5 [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s226619/Appendix.%201%20for%20Children%20and%20Families%20Strategy%202023-2028.pdf](http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s226619/Appendix.%201%20for%20Children%20and%20Families%20Strategy%202023-2028.pdf)
- 6 [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s241657/Appendix%201%20-%20Serious%20Violence%20and%20Exploitation%20Strategy.pdf](http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s241657/Appendix%201%20-%20Serious%20Violence%20and%20Exploitation%20Strategy.pdf)
- 7 [democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s243533/Appendix.%201%20for%20VAWG%20and%20Womens%20Safety%20Strategy.pdf](http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s243533/Appendix.%201%20for%20VAWG%20and%20Womens%20Safety%20Strategy.pdf)
- 8 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Adult-care-services/Our-Commitment-to-Carers.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Adult-care-services/Our-Commitment-to-Carers.pdf)
- 9 Special Educational Needs Disability and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029
- 10 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-Culture/Tower-Hamlets-Corporate-Parenting-Strategy-2023-2028-V4.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-Culture/Tower-Hamlets-Corporate-Parenting-Strategy-2023-2028-V4.pdf)
- 11 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-families-services/Early\\_help/TH-Early-Help-Strategy.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-families-services/Early_help/TH-Early-Help-Strategy.pdf)
- 12 [vimeo.com/828089818?fl=pl&fe=sh](http://vimeo.com/828089818?fl=pl&fe=sh)
- 13 How to fulfil your Statutory Duty - A toolkit for local authorities (nya.org.uk)
- 14 [nya.org.uk/national-youth-work-curriculum](http://nya.org.uk/national-youth-work-curriculum)

# APPENDIX 1

## Young Tower Hamlets Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change sets out how Young Tower Hamlets will be harnessed to develop interventions which provide positive experiences for young people in a safe space whilst developing their pro-social identities.

| Challenge   | Enablers and Conditions   | Activities   | Outputs   | Short-term Outcomes   | Long-term Outcomes  |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| The mission we are hoping to achieve  | The foundations which facilitate the design and implementation of successful delivery   | 'Hooks for change' where young people connect with others to engage  | Tangible results of activity where young people form habits, connect with others and succeed  | Changes resulting from accessing Young Tower Hamlets services   | Young people making positive sustainable choices  |
| All Tower Hamlets young people will benefit from skilled youth workers who will support their development, have a safe space to socialise and access to diverse range of youth work and sporting opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Safe Space in Every Ward</li> <li>• A skilled and qualified workforce</li> <li>• A workforce that reflects the community</li> <li>• A clear and engaging Youth Work curriculum</li> <li>• Partnership working with VCFS and partners</li> <li>• Workforce Development Strategy</li> <li>• Commissioning of specialist youth providers</li> <li>• Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Framework</li> <li>• Youth Participation and Engagement</li> <li>• Mayors Small Grants YEF and PAYP</li> <li>• Clear pathways to services</li> <li>• Data and insight led</li> <li>• Good Governance</li> <li>• Inclusive and accessible services for all</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open access youth provision</li> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Digital Offer</li> <li>• Detached youth provision</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Adventure learning</li> <li>• Targeted youth support</li> <li>• Youth participation</li> <li>• Commissioned specialist provision</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Accredited projects (e.g. ASDAN, DofE, AQA)</li> </ul> | <p>Increase in the number of young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participating in local youth safe spaces</li> <li>• participating in sports and hours of physical activities</li> <li>• engaged through detached youth work</li> <li>• receiving one-to-one targeted support</li> <li>• with improved employability skills</li> <li>• participating in youth voice activities and volunteering</li> </ul> <p>• Number of youth conflict mediated and supported young people in</p> <p>• Increase in the number of vulnerable and marginalised young people accessing youth services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved socio-economic skills and development</li> <li>• Increase accreditations and improve EET skills and opportunities</li> <li>• Increase engagement with activities and support services</li> <li>• Increase participation in sports and physical activities</li> <li>• Increase awareness of risk of harm outside the home</li> <li>• Reducing involvement in the criminal justice system or children's social care</li> <li>• Improved family relationships</li> <li>• Improved health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Improved perceptions of community safety</li> <li>• Increased accredited opportunities</li> <li>• Increased engagement in co-production activity</li> <li>• Increased youth voice and engagement in council decision making processes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people have improved skills, attitudes and knowledge to succeed</li> <li>• Young people feel safer</li> <li>• Young people feel healthier</li> </ul> |

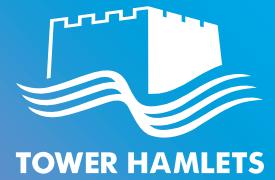
# APPENDIX 2

## Young Tower Hamlets Outcomes Framework Summary

| YTH Services                  | Short-term outcomes                                       |  |   | Long-term Outcomes  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
|                               | Outcome 1   | Outcome 2  | Outcome 3   |   |
| Universal Safe Spaces         | Improved socio-emotional skills development               | Increased engagement with activities and support services                      | Increase accreditations and improve EET skills and opportunities          |   |
| Rapid Response Team           | Increased engagement with activities and support services | Increase awareness of risk of harm outside the home                            | Improved perceptions of community safety                                  | Young people have improved skills, attitudes and knowledge to succeed |
| Targeted Youth Support        | Improved socio-emotional skills development               | Reducing involvement in the criminal justice system or children's social care. | Improved family relationships   | Young people feel safer   |
| Sports and Adventure Learning | Increase participation in sports and physical activities  | Improved health and wellbeing  | Increased accredited opportunities  | Young people feel healthier   |
| Participation                 | Improved socio-emotional skills development               | Increased engagement in co-production activity                                 | Increased youth voice and engagement in council decision making processes |   |







X @youngtowerhamlets

[www.youngtowerhamlets.org.uk](http://www.youngtowerhamlets.org.uk)

