



LBTH Parent and Family Support Service, Parental Engagement Team

Shortlisted for the Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing Award

About LBTH Parent and Family Support Service, Parental Engagement Team

The [Parental Engagement Team](#) supports parents and carers in enhancing their parenting skills and building stronger relationships with their children, so children have the best possible start in life. The team deliver a range of programmes that support family life, including; 1-1 and family support, curriculum and home-learning, on-line safety, creative, health and well-being, parenting, ready to learn/school attendance programmes and workshops.

The team also facilitate networks such as the Parent and Carer Council, Platform to Talk sessions, the Somali Parents and Carers Network, and the Dads Network, to foster community engagement and provide platforms for parents to share experiences and insights.

These networks aim to empower parents, enhance their involvement in their children's education, and contribute to the overall wellbeing of families in the borough. They work with approximately 8000 adults and children each year.

Family Learning Health and Wellbeing: The Healthy Families Programme

The Healthy Families Programme is a family-centered programme designed to promote family health and wellbeing. Developed in collaboration with parents, schools and early years settings, the programme focuses on building families' resilience and improving attendance and wellbeing. Through engaging parent only and parent/child activities, families gain knowledge and skills to support healthier lifestyle choices in a fun and interactive way.

The HF programme supports the council's wider objectives of addressing health inequalities and meets its objective of making it easier for children, young people and their families to eat more healthily, be more active and achieve a healthy weight. In LBTH, by reception class, 1 in 5 children have an unhealthy weight and 2 in 5 children have visually obvious dental decay.

The Healthy Families Programme focuses on key areas; healthy eating, promoting good oral health, emotional wellbeing and physical activity. Sessions aimed at younger children include: using The Very Hungry Caterpillar book to inspire and engage children through storytelling and eating activities to make healthy snacks from fruit and vegetables and promoting dental wellbeing through storytelling and fun games.



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Parents also explore learn about regulation techniques and promoting self-esteem in children. Through playing emotional wellbeing games such as emotion charades and mirror exercises, parents and children learn to identify emotions.

PET practitioners used the Historic Royal Palaces community access scheme to support physical activity, and have arranged family walks to Tower Hill and other London tourist attractions, as well as using local parks for guided walks. Local leisure facilities are promoted with both cycling and walking highlighted as an easy accessible means to being more active. Families are also informed of locally run activities near them, which are mostly free. This also enables families to connect with the wider community.

Through collaboration with schools, early years settings and community centres, the team has been able to reach a wide range of families, ensuring the programme is accessible, especially for those that may be isolated, vulnerable and hard to reach. Running activities in community settings is important to connect with parents who may not access services through schools. The team has also worked with a local woman's refuge to work with vulnerable Mothers in a safe environment; and with the community sector to deliver sessions to parents with deaf children.

Activities were also timetabled to coincide with Stay and Play sessions and Health Visitors surgeries, to enable the team to reach more families with younger children. To support inclusion, sessions are delivered in local community languages to engage parents with English as a second language. For families who don't have access to face-to-face activities, the team has delivered online sessions. The sessions have also been adapted with sensory play elements for children with SEN. For families not ready to join group activities, practitioners can provide one-to-one family support.



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Impact and next steps

Families in Tower Hamlets are benefitting from improved health awareness and practical strategies to maintain a healthier lifestyle. Nearly all families have improved awareness of health and made changes at home. Children have been motivated to continue with healthier snack options, brushing teeth and taking part in local park walks. The programme fosters a supportive community environment where parents and carers can share experiences and learn together, promoting healthier habits and wellbeing. Many parents have set up walking groups from school after they have attended the sessions.

Parents can also support their peers by becoming Healthy Family Parent Ambassadors (HFPA's). They receive community-based training and are supported to collaborate with their child's school to run Healthy Families' workshops and sessions. This is extending the programme's reach. There are additional training opportunities and volunteering offers which parents can access to expand their knowledge and confidence. Some parent ambassadors have gained work experience and for some, employment.

The team is looking to adapt and develop its future delivery by integrating successful strategies from similar initiatives. This includes co-location of services and embedding additional support such as financial or mental health advice, to provide comprehensive support and address multiple aspects of well-being; and expanding the ambassador programme to further enhance peer-to-peer support.

In response to further co-production with parents and schools, Healthy Families has already evolved from being a longer programme to shorter one-off sessions that has enabled the team to engage and reach more parents, with easy practical ideas to implement at home. The team continue to collect regular feedback and co-produce activities with families to identify areas of improvement, ensuring the programme remains responsive to the diverse needs of the Tower Hamlets' community.