

Better Together
STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES.
BUILDING
COMMUNITIES.

Tools and
Resources to
support our
work



Contents

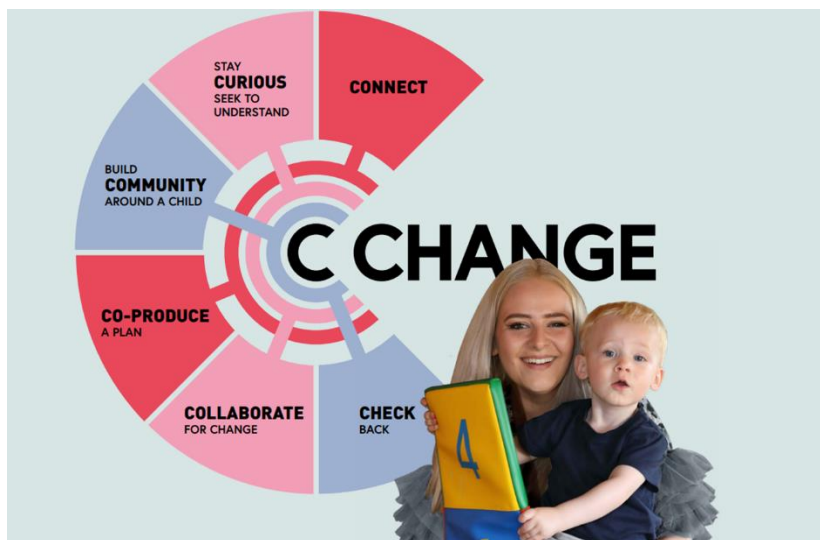
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Better Together is the Practice Framework within Tower Hamlets' Supporting Families Division. It was developed through consultation with staff and partners in 2021-22 and is our shared vision of what we are trying to achieve. It reminds us how we are expected to work with children & families, and each other, irrespective of which part of the division we work in. This framework is based on the ideas and concepts which underpin Restorative Practice and draws from other strength based approaches, such as Systemic and Trauma Informed Practice.

It is hoped that this Tools and Resources booklet will help you to see how the C-Change approach of the Better Together Framework (often referred to as the 6Cs) are being embedded across the division and give you the tools and resources to do that too. All the [Better Together Resources](#) can be found in the



Supporting Families Division Teams Channel by clicking the hyperlinks.

If you are interested in knowing more about the theoretical framework or research regarding Restorative Practice, then you can find information in the [Articles regarding Restorative Practice](#) folder.

1. CONNECT

Sometimes it is the simple things, like asking how someone is, remembering a birthday or anniversary, or establishing common interests that can help us connect and see beyond the role or label they have been given. In Tower Hamlets we want to be intentional about investing in relationships and view time getting to know each other as time well spent, whether this is the children and families/carers that we are working with, our colleagues or professional networks.

As well as informal ways of connecting, there are also lots of different resource ideas in the [Connect](#) folder in the Supporting Families Division Teams folder. Here are a few to particularly highlight.

We know from research with children and families, that the way we have traditionally spoken about or to them and recorded information, has been hurtful. We want to change this and make sure that the way we talk and write about the children and families we are working with is thoughtful, clear and not judgemental.

Please use the [Practice Guidance around Language](#) that has been developed by practitioners, to shape the language you use. There are also a host of resources to help in relation to language in the [Use of language](#) folder.

e) Practice Guidance on visits

Our main way of connecting with the children and families/carers that we are working with is through seeing them regularly. Our [Better Together Practice Standards One Minute Guides](#) sets out the basic practice expectations and standards that children and families can expect of Social Care Practitioners in Tower Hamlets. These practice expectations are informed by statutory regulation; the Social Work Professional Capabilities Framework, Knowledge and Skills Statement, Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers and the Pan London Child Protection Procedures.

2. BE CURIOUS

Being curious draws a lot of ideas from Systemic and Trauma Informed Practice. It reminds us to consider there may be multiple explanations for any given situation, and to dig deep to understand what's going on, holding off premature judgement and recognising this as ever changing rather than fixed. In doing this, we have a better likelihood of ensuring the right support is in place for the child and their family network.

a) Restorative Supervision Framework

It is important that supervision, whether 1-2-1 or group, values relationships and encourages reflection and hypothesising. The 1-2-1 and group supervision formats have been created with this in mind. The restorative group supervision circle is underpinned by a belief that everyone brings something to contribute, and that when we bring an open mind to a reflective space we are able to hear and consider perspectives we may not previously have thought of.

Up to date [Supervision Guidance](#) can be found in the General folder within the Supporting Families Division channel on Teams.

b) Chronologies

Chronologies are used as a way of recording significant incidents and events in a child's life, that can help build a picture of what has been happening within a family over a period of time. As well as providing a succinct overview of key

events, it is important we use them to be curious about patterns within a child's life and family history and that this informs assessments.

Practitioners in Edge of Care are particularly focusing on Analytical Chronologies in their work to support a child returning home as a way to analyse the history, focusing on the risk and protective factors associated with the child returning home and evidence of parental capacity to change.

Whilst chronologies are often focused on the agency's involvement with a family, chronologies can also be completed with children and families to build connection and understanding regarding their views on what has been significant in their life.

[Guide to chronologies](#)

c) Genograms, Cultural Genograms and Culturagrams

We encourage genograms to be co-created with families so they can help us understand their family connections better. It is important to seek permission to capture information that may be sensitive or difficult to talk about such as family members that have died, including through miscarriage or the paternity of children. When used as a conversational tool, with sensitivity and cultural humility, it can help identify family themes and dynamics, rather than a simple factual representation.

Building on genograms, a [Cultural Genogram](#) encourages a practitioner to consider with a family additional information regarding ethnicity, culture and family beliefs and the impact this has on their experience of living in Tower Hamlets.

A [Culturagram](#) is like a Cultural Genogram but considers 10 elements that are likely to be significant for a family, particularly if they have moved to this country from elsewhere. This includes for example, reason for relocation, impact of trauma or crisis events and their experience of racism or discrimination. When exploring these ideas with children and families, it is important to remember that there is likely to be some information that a child, young adult or family/carer are not willing or not able to share for a whole range of complex reasons. The LUUUTT model reminds us that there are stories that are [Lived, Untold, Unknown, Unheard, Told and Telling](#) and to be sensitive in acknowledging this.

More ideas can be found in the [Exploring family, culture, identity and power](#) subfolder within the Be Curious folder.

d) [Social GRRRAACCEEESSS](#)

This concept, developed by John Burnham, enables a practitioner to reflect on how aspects of their identity may be affecting how they relate to people who have the same or different characteristics, and how others relate to them. The letters in the word GRRRAACCEEESSS represent a range of factors that can

influence how we are perceived and perceive others. We encourage practitioners to explicitly think about how social GRRRAACCEESSS (often just written as Social Graces) may be influencing them and those they work with, with cultural humility.

Within the [Exploring family, culture, identity and power](#) folder there are helpful resources to assist you with exploring [Gender identity and sexuality](#) as well as consider the [Kyriarchy](#) of how certain identities historically assume more or less power within our society.

e) Assessment tools

We encourage all our assessments across the division – whether that be Asset Plus, Early Help Assessments, Child and Family Assessments, Pathway Plans or assessments of carers – to be completed with curiosity. Here is some guidance to enable this:

[HMIP Professional curiosity guide for managers](#)

[HMIP Professional curiosity guide for practitioners](#)

[Early Help Assessment One Minute Guide](#)

Our practice priority areas also have bespoke tools for assisting with undertaking meaningful assessments of need and can be found in the Teams folders:

[Harm outside the Home](#)

[REPAIR Documents](#)

[Neglect](#)

Here are a range of further [Assessment tools and ideas](#)

f) Trauma Informed Practice

Repercussions of trauma experienced in childhood may persist through adolescence and into adulthood. The intention of Trauma Informed Practice is to demonstrate an increased understanding of the ways present behaviours and difficulties can be understood in the context of past trauma.

With a Research in Practice log in (which all who have a towerhamlets.gov.uk email can create), you can access these e-learning resources

- [Trauma Informed Practice with Children, Young People and their Families](#)
- [Working with Trauma experienced parents](#)

g) Learning from Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Reviews

There is a lot to learn from when things have gone wrong, so that we can be aware of this for the future. We have brought together some of the different reviews of practice here which may provide a reflective thinking space to help you avoid common mistakes.

[Learning from Safeguarding Reviews](#)

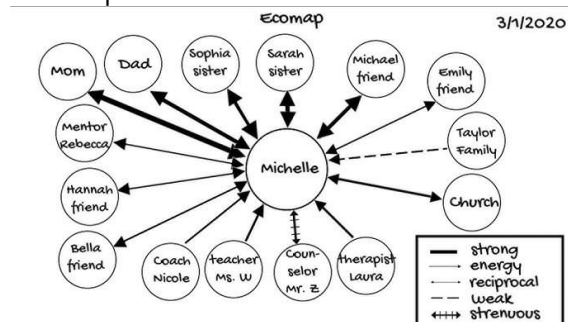
3. BUILD A COMMUNITY

The famous African proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child' and the wisdom and practices that come from many ancient and indigenous communities, are a key component of our Better Together framework. Involving wider family networks in decisions usually lead to more effective and sustainable solutions than when we impose decisions on others or don't include their network of support. Below are some ideas for how you can do this; more can be found [here](#).



a) Ecomaps

It is important that we understand who the important people and communities in a child's life are. Ecomaps can uncover resources and protective factors within a family that we may previously have been unaware of. Whilst a standard ecomap may simply name people and organisations, it can be used to facilitate a conversation about the strengths of relationships and uncover where these are strained or pose potential risks. Like



with genograms we encourage the use of ecomaps as a conversational tool to be co-produced with families.

b) Lifelong Links

We recognise that children who have been brought into Local Authority care unfortunately often lose connections with important people in their lives, whether family, friends, or other significant people. Lifelong Links aims to rebuild connection with these people through the skilful work of a trained Lifelong Links coordinator. We encourage all social workers supporting children that we care for to consider a referral.

Contact FamilyGroup.Conference@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more information.

[Lifelong Links One Minute Guide](#)

c) Community Organisations

Sometimes, children and families need additional support from local organisations. Tower Hamlets is really fortunate to have a wide range of resources to support our families. The [Community organisations and resources](#) folder within the Supporting Families Division Teams channel has been developed by staff within the division. If you are aware of another organisation that is not listed, please email the information to LearningAcademy@towerhamlets.gov.uk so that it can be uploaded. Similarly, if

you notice an organisation is listed that is no longer providing the service that is suggested, please email the Learning Academy so this can be removed. There is also a wealth of information about other local resources that can be found here [Tower Hamlets Local Offer](#)

d) Community around the worker

We know that in order to support children as best we can, we need to ensure frontline workers have access to high quality support and expertise. We are doing this through a mixed offer of reflective spaces, consultations and wellbeing support as follows:

(i) Reflective spaces

- With Dr Nadim Ahmad (Highly Specialist Clinical Psychologist, CAMHS in Social Care) and Dr Laura McGunnigle (Clinical Psychologist, CAMHS in Social Care Team)

These ½ hour sessions, offered each Learning Wednesday, are an opportunity to have an individual space to openly explore your work with children and families who may have experienced or present with symptoms of complex/developmental trauma. This might include how to work with the family, understanding the presentation within the context of trauma occurring, or how to look after yourself and cope with secondary trauma in relation to the work.

Email Nasima.Rahman@towerhamlets.gov.uk in the Learning Academy to book a space.

- Reflective and clinical group/individual supervision with Dr Barbara McKay

This is an opportunity for practitioners and professionals to participate in reflective and clinical discussions tailored to address challenges faced when working with children and their networks during difficult circumstances. These sessions provide a supportive environment to explore innovative strategies to navigate complex situations.

Email Nasima.Rahman@towerhamlets.gov.uk in the Learning Academy to book a space.

- Reflective supervision with the Learning Academy

During the first year as a social worker, reflective supervision is an integral part of the support available and is offered by the Practice Assessor within the Learning Academy. As part of the support available through the Early Career Framework, social workers in Years 2-5 post qualifying, can also take up the offer of regular or one off reflective supervision through a member of the Learning Academy team. This is led by the needs of the social worker but could include reflecting on work with a particular child/family, getting support on a specific issue or to develop a particular skill, a containing space to share worries and anxieties about the work, or to reflect on professional development. Frequency will depend on the needs of the worker but typically every 6-8 weeks for as long as is felt necessary/helpful.

Email Helen.Sweeney@towerhamlets.gov.uk in the Learning Academy to request this support.

(ii) Practice Consultations

These are available to support your work in the following areas, often on the Tuesday afternoon before Learning Wednesdays.

What	Who and when	How to book
Repair / Domestic abuse	Offered by Repair advocates as and when needed	Email Kate.Iwi@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Harm outside the Home	Offered by the exploitation team on the Tuesday afternoon before Learning Wednesdays	Email Exploitation.Team@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Neglect	Offered by the Neglect Working Group on the Tuesday afternoon before Learning Wednesdays	Email Anton.Grizzle@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Direct work with children	Offered by the Direct Work with Children working group on the Tuesday afternoon before Learning Wednesdays	Email Jennifer.Peddie@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Child Sexual Abuse	Offered by a pool of trained practitioners as and when required	Email Roland.Hunter@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Court work	Offered by LaShell McGlan every Wednesday 10-11.30am	Email LaShell.McGlan@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Language	Offered by the Language Working Group as and when required.	Email Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Working through conflict / difficulties in	Offered by a pool of trained Restorative	Email Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk

working relationships	Facilitators as and when required	
Child and Adolescent Mental health	Offered through CAMHS in Social Care	Email CiSCreferrals@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(iii) Wellbeing support

- Mental health and wellbeing offer through the wider Council

It is really important that you get support with your mental health and emotional wellbeing, whether this relates to work or not. There is a host of support available through the Council – see [Mental health and wellbeing \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing) on the Bridge for more details of what and how to access.

- Trauma Support Circles (sometimes known as Healing Circles)

Sometimes difficult things happen that affect a group of people, such as a team. This could be, for example, the death of a child or witnessing a violent incident. When we don't acknowledge these feelings and the impact on people there is a danger that people feel unsupported, unsure of how to manage these uncomfortable feelings and they are then more likely to carry them for longer.

The purpose of a Trauma Support Circle is to create a space to debrief and process what has happened and the feelings associated with this, recognising that this in itself can bring a sense of support and healing. However, it can also help consider what further support may be needed.

If a significant incident happens within your team, please contact Sam.Nair@towerhamlets.gov.uk or Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk to consider how you can be supported.

- Using the reflective spaces described in (i)

All of the reflective spaces that are described in the first part of this section can include an opportunity to consider how the work with a particular child/family is impacting on your own wellbeing.

e) Young Carers Project

The Young Carers Project is helping build a community of peer support for anyone aged 8-17 years old who has been identified as a young carer. There are two groups – the junior group for children aged 8-12 and the teen group for children aged 13-17. The group offers a relaxed space for children to come together with other children in a similar situation to relax, eat together, and do various activities on offer including pool, table tennis and football. Referrals are via the Multi Agency Support Team who then refer out to the project.

f) Mockingbird Project

The Mockingbird Project is a way of building a community around a foster carer and the children they care for. There are currently three Mockingbird Constellations supported by three Hub Home Carers. Each Hub Home Carer builds strong relationships with everyone in their hub, empowering the fostering

families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate or lead to living arrangements breaking down. In turn this helps increase protective factors around the children in our care.

g) Support for Special Guardians

We state in our Better Together vision that “we will keep children within their family network, immediate or wider, where it is safe to do so”. This includes supporting family and friends to take on long term care for a child through a Special Guardianship Order, when their birth parents are not able to. Emotional, practical and financial support is available through the Permanency, Support and Assessment Team.

Please speak to Eric.Obeng@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more details.

h) Family Hubs

Family Hubs are part of the Early Help service and bring together local services and advice for babies, children, young people turning 19 (or up to 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), and their families. They include the Start for Life services for 0 – 2-year olds.

They provide a single place to go for support and information from a variety of services including charities, voluntary groups, health care services, arts organisations and much more.

You can get support from a Family Hub if you live in Tower Hamlets and are:

- a parent or carer of a child aged 0 to 19, or 25 with special educational needs or a disability
- an expectant parent seeking guidance and support during pregnancy
- a child or young person up to the age of 19, or up to 25 for a young person with special educational needs or a disability.

Find out more [here](#).

i) Reparations

When someone has been harmed by the behaviour of another, it is important that there is an opportunity to repair the harm caused, albeit often indirectly, by giving back to the community. This is a central underlying ethos of the Reparations Projects that form part of the community orders given to children supported through the Youth Justice Service. The projects are intentionally more relational and meaningful than traditional 'community service' such as litter picking in high visibility jackets.

Current and previous projects include making improvements to Stepney City Farm, animal care, growing fruits and vegetables, maintenance work for the Urban Adventure Project, learning about bike mechanics and helping set up the activities, assisting volunteers and contributing to the Mile End Community

Garden. We have recently established a collaboration with the Felix Project, a local food charity. This involves the children participating in food preparation and delivery to support those in need.

Contact Samuel.Pierre@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more details.

j) Resettlement and Migration Team

This team was developed in 2022 within the Early Help service, as a response to meet the needs of Ukrainians seeking sanctuary in the UK following Russia's invasion. It now offers wrap around support to all those seeking sanctuary in the UK and placed in Tower Hamlets' accommodation through the Home Office relocation schemes. They identify support needs and work with internal and external partners to ensure those seeking sanctuary are supported to settle into their new community here.

Contact Nicola.Mutale@towerhamlets.gov.uk or Elka.Popova@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more information.

4. CO-PRODUCE

A key restorative principle is to keep decision making close to those who are most impacted by those decisions. We also know that when people are involved in decision making about their lives, they lead to more realistic and achievable plans. More information, ideas and research can be found in the [Co-produce a plan](#) section in the Better Together folder within the Supporting Families Division Teams channel including in the folder [Research and theory re co-production](#).

a) Family Group Conference

Family Group Conferences (FGC) are a way of putting family and friends at the heart of decision making in relation to how their child's needs will be met. Whilst a practitioner will develop certain questions they want the family network to consider, an important component of the FGC is the 'private family time' when family and friends create their own plan to put forward.

Our commitment is that all families who are being supported through the Supporting Families division will be offered a Family Group Conference, whether they are supported through Early Help, Youth Justice or Children's Social Care; self referrals are also accepted even when there isn't a practitioner involved. FGCs should be offered at the earliest point in the child's life. Any family plan created should inform and lead forward any other plan.

Contact FamilyGroup.Conference@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more information and see the following guides:

- [Family Group Conferences in Tower Hamlets video](#)
- [Early Help Family Group Conferences One Minute Guide](#)
- [Children's Social Care Family Group Conferences One Minute Guide](#)

- [Family Group Conference Information Leaflet](#)

b) Restorative Approach to Child Protection Conferences

Child protection conferences often happen in an environment where there is understandable tension and worry within families; the professional network too can feel apprehensive. Families can feel fearful of the consequences of these meetings and overwhelmed by the seriousness of the process. We acknowledge the power imbalance that families often experience when participating in a Child Protection conference. We want our conferences to be restorative and use a restorative model to underpin our approach. We want to ensure that families are clear on why the meeting is taking place and what will happen. It is hoped that in turn, families will be more able to contribute to the meeting and the plan that is developed.

To help families be clear about the meetings we aim to ensure families are given 12 days' notice of the meeting, providing this doesn't cause delay in safeguarding a child. Our reports should be written in a clear and jargon-free way and shared with families before the meeting. We want every child over the age of 12 to be as actively involved in meetings about them as is possible and appropriate. They should be offered opportunities to meet with the chair, attend the meeting, have an advocate, or any other consideration that will allow them to participate. Child Protection chairs will also meet with the parents/carers ahead of the meeting to hear their perspective and answer any questions. Advocates should be offered to all children over 5 and every parent/carer. Child protection chairs will seek to acknowledge the impact of racism and discrimination that can impact families and understand the impact of their culture and identity in exploring a conversation about what could be helpful to them.

The conference will seek to understand the impact of potential harm on the child and look at how to build on strengths and protective factors toward positive change in agreeing what needs to happen next. [Restorative Approach to Child Protection Conferences offer](#)

c) Advocacy

Advocates are available to enable children or their parents/carers to participate more fully in Family Group Conferences, Child Protection conferences and Children Looked After reviews. Children in our care or care experienced young adults can also access advocates through [Coram](#) advocacy service. The advocate will consider with the child or parent how they want to be supported, whether this is by way of attending a meeting with them or sharing the person's views on their behalf.

Advocates for Family Group Conferences, Child Protection Conferences or Children Looked After Reviews can be requested by emailing Richard.Desjardins@towerhamlets.gov.uk and FamilyGroup.Conference@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Advocates via Coram can be requested by calling 0808 8005792 or emailing help@coramvoice.org.uk

[Advocacy information](#)

[How can an advocate help you \(children and adult\)](#)

[Stages of Child Protection advocacy process](#)

d) Safety Planning

It's really important that safety plans are developed in conjunction with the people it affects and their network. Whilst the goal is to safeguard the child or victim/survivor, it is important that the plan is realistic, specific to their situation and considers cultural factors that may make action more or less likely.

Guidance, templates and examples of good practice in relation to Harm Outside the Home safety planning and safety planning in relation to Domestic Abuse can be found in the relevant folders in the Supporting Families Division Teams channel:

[Harm outside the Home](#)

[REPAIR Documents](#)

e) Good Lives Model

The Good Lives Model aims to reduce reoffending by thinking with children about what they value in life and what they need in order to achieve this. Children are encouraged to identify goals and values underlying their offending and then to collaboratively formulate a Good Lives Plan to identify what will help them meet their goals in socially acceptable ways. It is being used within Tower Hamlets Youth Justice Service.

[Good Lives Model info sheet](#)

f) Words and Pictures

The Words and Pictures concept was developed in the 1980s by Susie Essex and John Gumbleton in their work with children and families in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Bristol. It is a storyboard, using simple words and hand drawn pictures to explain to children and their network what agencies are worried about, and what the plan to address those worries are. We know that when children are clear on what the worries are and what the plan is, they are more able to let people know when things are not as they should be. Similarly, when parents and their network are clear on the worries and the plan, they are more able to keep children safe.

More information and examples can be found in this [Words and Pictures](#) folder.

g) Co-produced care and pathway plans

There are standardised forms on Mosaic for completing care and pathway plans for children in our care, and care experienced young adults being supported

through the Through Care Service. We encourage practitioners to write these to the child or care experienced adult that the plan is about, and include their views and strengths as much as possible.

To take this further, there is also a pilot which enables practitioners to have conversations with the child or care experienced adult about how they would like to contribute to their care or pathway plan – this could be, for example, by writing a letter, or answering some questions, or drawing pictures of what they would like discussed – anything to aid creativity and their involvement in co-producing the plan that is about them.

For more information and to consider how you could ensure the child or young adult is involved as much as they would like in their care planning, please speak to the Independent Reviewing Officer or Shirley.Quashie-Dunne@towerhamlets.gov.uk

h) Co-producing new ways of doing things

When we are trying to do something new, it is good to ask who will be affected by this change, and try to get them involved in shaping the new development. Whilst there are varying degrees of how to do this – for example, from consultation on something that's already been drafted, through to drafting and developing together – we encourage anyone involved in bringing about changes, to consider how to bring people along with them and make best use of the wealth of knowledge and experience they possess.

Examples of co-producing new ways of doing things includes:

- getting input from children supported through the Youth Justice Service regarding the design of the intervention plan and logo for the service
- the work done with families, partners and staff in Early Help to develop the Family Hub behaviours
- the listening circles (see below) regarding people's experiences of being the subject of and/or investigating complaints in order to shape the development of the Restorative Approach to Complaints (see under Collaborate for Change)

There are several groups within the Supporting Families Division that are helping us do this already, and it is important to connect with them and make use of their ideas when developing new ways of doing things. Here are a selection of the groups available across the Division.

(i) Children Living In Care Council (CLICC)

The CLICC is supported by Tower Hamlets Youth Participation Service for all children and young adults with care experience. Three age-specific groups have been established:

- Junior CLICC (8 to 12 years)
- Teen CLICC (13 to 17 years)
- CLICC Plus (18 to 24 years)

The groups include a varied and inspiring range of activities and provide opportunities for them to meet new people, build relationships and develop greater confidence. They also provide opportunities for those with care experience to share their feedback to help develop and improve services. The CLICC Plus group runs from Kitcat Terrace and, along with informal opportunities to connect with each other there is a structured offer of support from other agencies including tutors, ESOL classes, career workpath, housing, health and there is now a running club!

We are currently recruiting to all CLICC groups, so if you are working with a child in our care or young adult with care experience who would like to join any of the CLICC groups kindly contact Samantha.Anderson@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more information. We would love to hear from you and work with you on getting more children and young adults involved.

(ii) Parents Forum

The Parents Forum helps shape how Family Hubs and Children and Family Centres are run and what services they offer. It gives parents and carers of children (from birth to 19, or up to 25 for those with special needs) a chance to share ideas and have a say in the centres' development. The forum has three main goals:

- allowing local parents and carers to influence services
- encouraging them to take leadership roles and
- improving support for families

Any local parent or carer with children in the age group served by the centres can join, making sure the forum represents the community and meets the needs of local families.

Contact sheli.kadir@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more details.

(iii) Family Group Experts

The Family Group Experts are parents whose children have been on a Child in Need or Child Protection plan. Although initially started as a peer support group, they have been increasingly significant in contributing to practice developments within the division, joining working groups and providing views on guidance documents. The group meets monthly.

Contact Jane.Towey@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more details.

(iv) Youth Participation Forum

The Youth Participation Forum is organised through the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and is an opportunity for anyone who is being supported through the YJS to come together twice a month to give views and shape the service in an informal setting with others. Day trips and residentials are also organised through this forum.

See [Youth Justice Participation Forum](#) or contact Tyrelle.Ritchie@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more details.

If you are wanting or needing to introduce a change in the way things are done, then please get in touch with the Better Together Lead Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk to explore options and approaches.

i) Listening circles

Listening circles are opportunities for people to come together and share their perspective, often relating to a particular issue or experience. Whilst circles can be sequential (going round the circle) or 'popcorn' (where people choose when to input), it is important that all have an opportunity to speak and careful attention is paid to ensure one person doesn't dominate. The purpose is to listen without responding, although once the circle is complete it may be helpful for a response; on other occasions actions that are needed as a result of what has been heard will be agreed as a group.

Listening circles have been used in Tower Hamlets for Senior Leaders to hear about the experience of staff to help shape support going forward – for example, during Covid and to consider the impact of racism in the workforce. They can also be used with families to create a space for them all to listen to each family member's experience, for example, in relation to a significant event that has happened and to be heard. When we listen first, we are more likely to be able to develop plans together about a way forward.

[A Guide to Listening Circles](#)

5. COLLABORATE FOR CHANGE

Our Better Together framework encourages practitioners to consider themselves as skilled staff, able to engage those we are working with in the process of change. Every visit and meeting is an opportunity for meaningful intervention, particularly when these have been thoughtfully planned with the child/family's needs in mind and yet are also flexible to what arises at the time.

Better Together and Restorative Practice on which a lot of the framework is based, have a key focus on relationships: building relationships, maintaining relationships and repairing relationships when things go wrong. Collaborating for change is therefore also about intentionally trying to repair relationships when hurt or harm has occurred.

We acknowledge that collaborating with others who may offer particular expertise or programmes of support can be helpful too. There are a range of organisations beyond the division who can support families, and more information can be found in the [Community organisations and resources](#) folder.

However, this section will highlight a range of resources and interventions on offer through the division to help bring about change.

a) Skilled Practitioners

(i) Learning and Development offer

We recognise that our staff are our greatest asset, and we are committed to a high quality and flexible learning and development offer to support the needs of our staff including:

- Specialist training courses provided by national experts and leading academics
- Accredited and high value courses for example in Practice Education and Systemic Practice
- Leadership courses including a bespoke programme for staff from the Global Majority
- Experiential learning such as through coaching, mentoring, shadowing and Action Learning
- Learning Wednesdays which take place on the first Wednesday of the month, involving monthly bite sized sessions led by practitioners and people with lived experience of our services
- Research partnerships with Research in Practice and Making Research Count

More detail can be found in the Workforce Development Plans:

[Children's Social Care Workforce Development Plan 2023-2026.pdf](#)

[Early Help Workforce Development Plan 2023-2026.pdf](#)

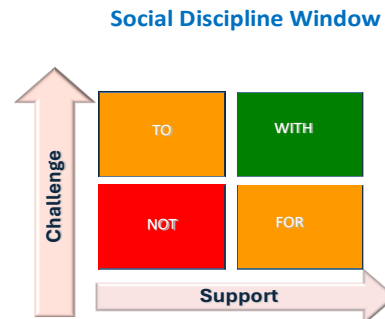
The Workforce Development Plan for Youth Justice is currently being developed, and so until it is finalised please speak to your manager to discuss learning and development opportunities. Please also make use of learning opportunities available to you through the Learning Academy and on the Learning Hub.

(ii) Direct work resources

There are a range of resources available to help you undertake meaningful interventions. Please use the [Direct work resource](#) folder on the Supporting Families Division Teams Channel, use materials in your direct work bag, borrow resources from the direct work tools library by the 1st Floor Breakout Area or book a consultation to consider how to use the resources to undertake a meaningful intervention via Jennifer.Peddie@towerhamlets.gov.uk

iii) Social Discipline Window

The Social Discipline Window was developed by [Ted Wachtal and Paul McCold](#). It describes a way of working that is characterised by offering high support and high challenge, recognising this as the most likely approach to lead to change and growth. This is known as working 'with' as opposed to offering high challenge but low support (doing 'to'), high support but low challenge (doing 'for') or offering little challenge or support ('not' doing anything). We encourage practitioners to work 'with' children and their families – offering a healthy amount of challenge and expectation, alongside support - and to have reflective conversations within supervision when this is hard.



[Social Discipline Window](#)

b) Repairing hurt or harm

One of the commitments we make in our Better Together framework is to “prevent harm and repair damage to people and relationships”. Restorative Practice, drawing on ideas from Restorative Justice provides several ways to try to do this.

(i) Nonviolent Communication and Affective Statements

While we may not consider the way we talk to be violent, words often lead to hurt and pain, whether for others or ourselves.” — *Marshall Rosenberg*

Dr Marshall Rosenberg, an American psychologist, mediator and teacher, developed the concept of nonviolent communication during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Rosenberg drew from his own childhood experiences of violence, including anti-semitism to develop ways to communicate within families, schools and communities that build connection rather than violence.

A central belief is that when we vulnerably express our own [feelings](#) and [needs](#) without judgement and empathically listen to the feelings and needs of the other, we can start to repair relationships.

A simple starting point for putting this into practice and convey our own feelings when something has happened that could impact our relationship with another person, is to share an Affective Statement. These include 3 steps:

1. Stating the behaviour of the other person factually and without judgement (e.g. “when I rang you 3 times and didn’t get a response rather than “when you ignored my calls”)
2. Expression of feeling (“I felt sad and anxious” not “you made me feel”) which can include an explanation of why this is important to you

3. A clear suggestion of what you would prefer/need the other person to do instead (e.g. if you can't take my call at the time could you send me a message and let me know when we could talk).

More information can be found in the [Affective Statements and Non Violent Communication](#) folder.

(ii) Restorative Questions

In the 1990s, [Terry O'Connell](#) an Australian Police Officer was working with children who had committed crimes. He started to question traditional policing practice and, drawing on learning from indigenous community practices, realised that letting people talk to the person who has caused them harm, about how their behaviour had impacted them, was more effective than blaming and punishing offenders. He started bringing together victims and offenders, using specific questions to enable them to share their experiences and the impact of the crime committed. The questions are now recognized as a key part of the modern day Restorative Justice movement.

However, they have also now been shown to be effective in other situations where there isn't a clear cut victim/offender, but where something has happened that has caused hurt or harm. We encourage practitioners and managers who have undertaken the Restorative Practice (Better Together) Action Learning Sets to consider using the [Restorative questions](#) to bring together those who have been impacted by a low level incident that has happened, such as an argument or misunderstanding. See Facilitated Restorative Meetings below for information on how they are being used in more formal ways.

The questions can be further distilled down to a [3 step process](#) asking

- What happened?
- Who has been affected?
- And what needs to happen?

Allowing each person affected to share their experience of the situation and the impact, whilst also listening to other people's experience, can build understanding and enable those affected to find a way forward to repair the relationship.

(iii) Facilitated Restorative Meetings

There are several people within the division who are trained in offering what is internationally referred to as a Restorative Conference within the Restorative Justice tradition. In Tower Hamlets we are currently referring to these as Facilitated Restorative Meetings to avoid confusion with Child Protection Conferences, Family Group Conferences or Better Together staff conferences!

Essentially, they are opportunities to bring people together who have been hurt or harmed by the behaviour of another. Often both/all parties feel they are the person who has been harmed rather than has caused the harm and that is OK as

long as there is something that has happened that has impacted the relationship. Careful preparation ensures that the meeting would only go ahead if people are willingly giving consent for this and have some desire to the repair relationship. Once people have had the opportunity to share, be heard and to listen, they are then often able to work together to repair the harm caused.

We are currently piloting the offer of Facilitated Restorative Meetings as an option in a small number of situations which will incrementally build:

1. Where appropriate/helpful, as part of the informal resolution of a complaint made by someone we are working with or their parent/carer; or as an alternative to progressing to more formal stages
2. Where an incident has happened between a child and another person beyond the immediate family, for example another child
3. We are starting to consider if there are situations that could benefit from this relating to a child's behaviour whilst living with a foster carer or potentially and where appropriate, after an investigation has been undertaken by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as part of the repair work.

In addition, through this first phase, staff who have completed the Restorative Conference Facilitator training are able to use the skills they have gained in situations that may benefit from a Facilitated Restorative Meeting when they see a need arise in their day to day work. Unless dealing with a matter quickly and informally, this should be with consultation and support from the Better Together Lead.

There are 3 people who are part of the Learning, Organisational and Cultural Development (LOCD) Team who are also trained as facilitators and are able to offer Facilitated Restorative Meetings in situations of staff conflict.

To consider whether a Facilitated Restorative Meeting could be helpful, please contact Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk to book a consultation with one of the facilitators.

(iv) Restorative Approach to Complaints

In line with our commitment to repair relationships, we are developing a Restorative approach to complaints. The main aspects of this are to:

- rely more on conversation than email, in an attempt to understand each other's perspective and resolve the matter at the earliest opportunity
- view complaints as an opportunity to listen to the deeper need and reflect on where the learning is, rather than focusing on defending or blaming
- recognise that emotions can be heightened for all involved in a complaint – whether it's the person making the complaint, the person being complained about or the person looking into the complaint – and seek to ensure appropriate offers of support and guidance are in place

- consider how best to repair any hurt or harm that may have been caused as a result of the process, particularly regarding relationships

For more information, please contact Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk – Better Together Lead in the Learning Academy.

c) Interventions

(i) Universal and Targeted sessions through Children and Family Centres

There is a rich resource of support on offer across the 12 main Children and Family Centres and further satellite sites. This is complemented by a whole range of additional support available through partners within the Family Hubs – more information can be accessed here: [About Us | Tower Hamlets | Family Hubs \(thfamilyhubs.co.uk\)](https://thfamilyhubs.co.uk)

All Children and Family Centre services are free, and they include:

- universal sessions (Stay and Play, starting solids, school readiness, baby massage and breastfeeding support)
- drop-in fun play activities, such as ball pools, sandpits, building blocks, story book and baby play areas, and sensory play
- targeted sessions (Little Talkers, Invitation to Play, healthy eating, breastfeeding support, etc)
- support with Early Learning applications
- parenting programmes
- support into employment through Tower Hamlets WorkPath and adult learning courses
- specialist programmes (e.g. Positive Change)
- Healthy Start vitamins and vouchers
- signposting and referral on to appropriate services

For a full and up to date timetable go to [Early Help & Children and Families Service | Tower Hamlets | Family Hubs \(thfamilyhubs.co.uk\)](https://thfamilyhubs.co.uk)

(ii) Social Workers in Secondary Schools (SWISS) & Social Workers in Primary Schools (SWIPS)

The SWISS and SWIPS teams place experienced social workers in Tower Hamlets secondary and primary schools; the latter being possible provided the school have bought into the SWIPS offer.

Through collaboration with school staff they ensure that safeguarding concerns can be addressed at the earliest opportunity. Social Workers in these teams undertake Early Help Assessments and Children & Family Assessments under s17 Children 1989 (Child in Need); they will also undertake assessments under s47 Children Act 1989 (Child Protection) and/or bring children into the care of the Local Authority, should the need arise *for children they are already working with*. In addition to these core objectives, SWISS also organise lunchtime games clubs

and coordinate outdoor activities during school half-terms to promote development and wellbeing. For more information see [Social Workers In Secondary Schools](#) or contact Sara.Lewis@towerhamlets.gov.uk for SWISS or Ann.Walker@towerhamlets.gov.uk for SWIPS.

(iii) Baby Feeding Service

The Baby Feeding service within Early Help offers support and information on all matters related to feeding babies. It offers support with feeding, whether breast or bottle to all parents living in Tower Hamlets or who gave birth at the Royal London Hospital. The team is made up of Baby Feeding Specialists - local mothers who speak Sylheti / Bengali and Somali as well as English, have breastfed their own children and undertaken further training to support other mothers.

The team runs 2-hour 'getting ready to breastfeed' antenatal workshops and supports mothers on the postnatal ward at the Royal London hospital. They visit mothers at home after discharge to help them get off to a good start with feeding their babies in the early days.

The team runs 6 breastfeeding drop-in groups each week. Details of the groups can be found at www.thfamilyhubs.co.uk

To speak to a member of the service or request a home visit call 07961 609626 Calls will be returned by the next working day.

(iv) Youth Justice interventions

When children become known to the Criminal Justice Service via the Police or the Courts for crimes that they have committed, the Youth Justice Service provides meaningful interventions for them to engage in, in partnership with others. The [Youth Justice interventions offer](#) includes a range of targeted interventions:

- The Ether programme, specifically aimed at developing leadership skills in children from the Global Majority
- Your Stance Weapons Awareness which explores the impact of weapon related behaviour on others and empowers them to keep themselves and others safe
- Drive and Takeaway intervention specifically for those with a recent or previous motoring offence which uses Virtual Reality headsets to help explore the impact of motoring and vehicle offences
- Girls empowerment group, helping empower girls to make safer choices and develop a positive self image
- The Youth Justice Service Enabling Fund is a resource that practitioners can use in order to access funding for resources that may be of benefit to the children that we work with

(v) Edge of Care

Edge of Care is a well-established, multi-disciplinary, valued team which successfully helps to support children who are on the edge of care to remain with their families, and to return children home to parental care when it is safe to do so. The team works hard to assist families to find their own solutions to bring about change, and are positively regarded by the families they work with.

Whilst they usually work with children aged 11-17, they are trialling working with a younger cohort of children from age 8 in relation to their reunification work. It is hoped this will help give the opportunity for more children to return home when this is safe to happen.

More information can be found in this [Edge of Care leaflet](#) or on the Bridge here [Edge of Care Service](#).

If you think a family you are working with could benefit from this support, please make a referral which will then be considered with you at the Resources Panel, which meets fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons via Microsoft Teams.

Contact Charlotte.Moodie@towerhamlets.gov.uk or Djamila.Aggabi@towerhamlets.gov.uk for more information.

(vi) Systemic Family Therapy Clinic

This new clinic offers systemic consultations to social workers and families every other Thursday afternoon, at the Town Hall. Led by a family therapist supported by a reflecting team, the clinic is a space for social workers to attend on their own or with families, to think about relationships and communication both within the family, and the wider network. Dependent on the need and circumstances, this can progress to family therapy being offered within the clinic.

Referrals are open to all families open to Children's Social Care, excluding those where there is an allocated CAMHS worker.

The clinic will be open for referrals from November 2024. To request a referral form or if you have any questions please email Daniel.Blanchard@towerhamlets.gov.uk or Nina.Stovold@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(vii) Functional Family Therapy

This team is based within Regulated Services and Resources and works with children aged 10-17 who are at risk of criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, gang or county line involvement or offending behaviour. Functional Family Therapy is an evidence based therapeutic intervention for the whole family, delivered in their home by highly trained and skilled therapists.

This service is currently being offered in Tower Hamlets as part of a funded Randomised Control Trial. Referrals can be received from across Early Help, Youth Justice and Children's Social Care.

See the [Functional Family Therapy](#) folder for more information, including information regarding this being offered as a Randomised Control Trial or contact Jennifer.Flandro@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(viii) Therapeutic Fostering and Care Team (TFACT)

We recognise that children who need to be cared for by someone other than their parents have usually experienced some form of trauma during their childhood. This can then impact on the child's behaviour and ability to form secure relationships with caregivers, which in turn can unfortunately increase the risk of future care arrangements and relationships breaking down.

The Therapeutic Fostering and Care Team within Regulated Services and Resources, draws on models of attachment and trauma with Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy underpinning the work. They offer training, support and guidance to foster carers, those looking after children under Special Guardianship Orders and both assessing and supervising social workers. The focus is on the relationship and the impact of developmental trauma to help carers nurture attachments with their child, increase their skills and confidence and prevent the breakdown of relationships and living arrangements.

For more information see [Therapeutic Fostering and Care Team leaflet](#) or contact Rebecca.Pons@towerhamlets.gov.uk or Louisa.Morrison@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Make a referral by emailing tfactreferrals@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(ix) CAMHS in Social Care

The CAMHS in Social Care Team (CiSC) is a multi-disciplinary team of CAMHS professionals in Tower Hamlets dedicated to working with children who have a Social Care plan (Child in Need, Child Protection or Child Looked After). The team has been established in order to offer a dedicated service to children, families and the networks around them to make sure that children suffering difficulties in their social care also benefit from professional advice and guidance in relation to their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Sometimes children or their family will benefit from a CiSC professional working directly with them regarding the child's mental health. In other situations, it is more appropriate to help the workers and family members that already know the child to give them that support.

Requests for both consultations and intervention is through emailing CiSCreferrals@towerhamlets.gov.uk. Referrals are checked on a Monday morning and allocated for a consultation by way of a calendar invite. If the request is more urgent, then staff should contact the general CAMHS duty team during gam-5pm Monday-Friday on 020 74262375.

(x) Diamond Project

The Diamond Project is a package of support for parents who have had at least one child under 5 removed from their care in the last 5 years. It is important that the mother is not pregnant and does not currently have a child in their care. The purpose is to support the parent to make changes in their lives to reduce the risk of having another child removed from their care.

There are 2 pathways – one is for those who are not yet ready to make changes, but would benefit from regular contact from a trusted professional (contact group) and the other is for those who are ready and willing to engage in a more intensive programme of support to make changes (participant group).

More details including referral criteria are contained within this [Diamond project leaflet](#) or contact DiamondProject@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(xi) Your Choice

Your Choice is a new pan-London, pro-social Violence Reduction Programme. It is delivered by 30 London Local Authorities including Tower Hamlets. We have Your Choice trained practitioners within the Exploitation Service, Edge of Care Team and Targeted Youth Service who can work with children between 11 and 18 at risk of harm outside the home, using psychologically informed, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) tools and techniques.

For more information see [Your Choice – LIA](#) and [Your Choice Workbook](#) or speak to Sarah.Hall@towerhamlets.gov.uk Group Manager within the Exploitation Service who co-ordinates the offer within Tower Hamlets.

(xii) Reducing Parental Conflict and REPAIR package of interventions

Conflict between parents which is ongoing or poorly resolved has a negative impact on children. In Tower Hamlets we have access to a range of interventions which aim to reduce parental conflict which you can find in the [Reducing Parental Conflict Resources](#) folder.

Part of the Reducing Parental Conflict interventions is a mediation service for parents in conflict, to help them find better ways of resolving their difficulties and disagreements. In mediation, a trained, independent and neutral person – a mediator – will help parents develop their own solutions and agreements. See [Mediation for Parents in conflict](#) for more details.

Additionally, there are a range of interventions to help bring about change across the continuum from reducing parental conflict through to domestic abuse. More details including how to refer can be found here [REPAIR package of interventions](#)

INTERVENTION NAME	WHO FOR	PLATFORM /METHOD
One Plus One		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Me You & Baby Too 	New Parents or about to be parents	Online Self or supported by a practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arguing Better 	Intact Couples and or extended family members	Online Self or supported by a practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting it right for Children 	Separated Parents	Online Self or supported by a practitioner
Practitioner Guide	All Practitioners Working with families and parents	Online/can download as a PDF
Additional learning	Everyone and free	Online
Mediation	Any two parties to help them resolve difficulties	In Person
TRIPLE P FAMILY TRANSITIONS	For parents and carers of children of all ages who are/have experienced separation or divorce	In Person
Early REPAIR programme	For fathers whose behaviour is impacting on his family following a risk assessment	In Person 2 x one days with a month in-between And 1-1 support
POSITIVE CHANGE SERVICE	For fathers and mothers and children	Online In person Group and Individual

For more details contact the Reducing Parental Conflict Outreach Worker - caroline.morgan2@towerhamlets.gov.uk or the Positive Change Service Manager Kate.lwi@towerhamlets.gov.uk

(xiii) Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)

VIG is a strengths based, therapeutic intervention that uses video feedback to help parents/carers/significant others notice what they are doing well in their communication with their child/the child they are working with, and consider how things could be better. It is recommended in various National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines including in relation to promoting secure attachments and supporting communication in children with autism. More information including videos of parents talking about VIG can be found at www.videointeractionguidance.net

In Tower Hamlets we have a small number of people who are trained or are training in this intervention including in CAMHS in Social Care, Children and Family Centres and Eva Armsby Family Centre. If you think a family you are

working with may benefit from VIG, particularly to help improve parent/child relationships or increase parental capacity to understand their child's needs, then please contact Marie.Larvin@towerhamlets.gov.uk to have an initial discussion about whether this is possible.

(xiv) Exploitation service

The Exploitation Service is available to help upskill colleagues across the division and beyond in relation to harm outside the home, through training, consultations and advice so that you can work more effectively with the children you are supporting.

Contact Exploitation.Team@towerhamlets.gov.uk

6. CHECK BACK

a) Feedback forms

Getting feedback from the children, families and carers that we work with is an important part of checking back. There are 3 feedback cycles per year, each lasting 4 months. During each cycle practitioners are asked to provide the feedback link or QR code (see below) to at least 5 people they are working with. The feedback forms are anonymous, but people can opt in to receive a telephone call to provide more feedback and this will not be anonymous.

At the end of each 4 month feedback cycle the project Working Group completes a short report summarising the feedback received ('You Said'). The Senior Leadership Team are then asked to provide a short response ('We Did') to the feedback report outlining how the feedback received will inform strategy, services, management discussions and practice.

The combined 'You Said, We Did' report will be shared with Senior Leaders and practitioners to inform reflections and thinking on practice.

English Language Version:

<https://forms.office.com/e/mfEKiGViFF>

Bengali Language Version:

<https://forms.office.com/e/47HMg8SpEK>

Somali Language Version:

<https://forms.office.com/e/E8nVwswXgM>



b) Quality Assurance Framework

We seek to ensure that our Quality Assurance framework is in line with our restorative values and Better Together framework. In practice this means placing the conversation with the practitioner who has undertaken the work, as well as

the family who have been supported, as core parts of the audit. We encourage auditors to be curious and ask questions where practice does not appear to be how we would want it and to complete the audit with a spirit of high support, high challenge. During the audit conversation we also ask for feedback from the practitioner to understand what has helped or hindered their work with the family.

The audit should be written in a way that reflects strengths as well as identifying areas to work on as we strive to work towards excellence for children. We encourage auditors to write their audit directly to the practitioner whose work they are auditing.

Following an audit cycle, a learning campaign is developed to address any areas for improvement. It is important that we then check back to see whether that intervention (for example, awareness raising, training) has made a difference. This is done through the next full audit cycle of that service, as well as through dip audits – where a narrow focus is taken to the work we are doing with a larger number of children – for example, to check specifics such as whether neglect tools can be seen on the record of all children where neglect is a concern.

c) Practice Week and Practice Observations

Practice Week gives senior leaders within partner agencies and the Council (eg Senior and Directorate Leadership Team, Lead Members, the Mayor) a unique opportunity to see practice with families we are working with and hear directly from both them and practitioners.

During the week they spend time with staff across the division to observe and audit practices, discuss the work and chat to families. Observations and reflections from this experience are recorded and drawn together to assist future learning.

d) My Annual Review

My Annual Review is the Council's corporate staff appraisal system, and it supports meaningful conversations between the employee and the line manager. The annual review takes place during 1st April-30th June and outcomes of conversations are recorded online, as well as training and wellbeing objectives added to the employee's development plan.

You can access My Annual Review on the Learning Hub.

e) Exit interviews

We don't want people to leave Tower Hamlets, but when they decide to, we want to take any learning available from their experience of working with us. Exit interviews are carried out by the Learning Academy using the Council's framework. The feedback is anonymised and then drawn together in themes for the Senior Leadership Team to consider what action may be necessary to

improve the service we offer and the experience of the workforce. To request an exit interview, please email Learning.Academy@towerhamlets.gov.uk