

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets would like to thank all of the Healthwatch volunteers who helped to promote, organise and manage this event and all of the local residents who gave up their valuable time to participate.



Glossary

Tower Hamlets Together is a partnership of local health and social care service providers that aim to provide more joined up, person centred services. It includes Tower Hamlets GP Care Group, Barts Health Trust, East London Foundation Trust, the local authority and the voluntary sector.

NHS Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) plan and fund (commission) most local health services.

Birthing centres and midwife-led units (MLU) are run by midwives without the medical facilities of a hospital. They can be next to a main hospital maternity unit ('alongside') or completely separate from a hospital ('freestanding'). Tower Hamlets has a birthing centre alongside the maternity at the Royal London Hospital and a freestanding midwife-led unit at the Barkantine Practice.

GP Networks The GP Surgeries in Tower Hamlets and many local services are grouped into eight geographical network that then come together in pairs to form four Localities. Healthwatch Tower Hamlets aim to hold a Your Voice Counts event in each locality over the course of the year.

This event was held in Network 8 which is Blackwall and Cubitt Town.



Contents

Key Messages	4
About the event	5
You and your health	6
1: Walking	6
2 Young people's concerns	9
3: Children's health	12
4: Parent and Carer Council	12
You and health services	13
5: Maternity services	13
6: Prioritising spending	16
7: Adults with learning disabilities	17
8: Developing an integrated system	21
Service feedback	21
General Comments	22
Maternity services	23
Appendix 1: Young people's concerns	25

Key Messages

- This report strengthens the previously proposed idea of a walking campaign in Tower Hamlets. Families with children, teenagers and schools would be key stakeholders to engage.
- Participants to the events see walking as a social and recreational activity; they are more likely to walk for leisure and socialising purposes than to walk to work or to appointments. Families often walk together for leisure. People say that they would be more likely to walk in a community where they feel safe and where there are good amenities and recreations to walk to.
- Young people in Tower Hamlets are concerned about their health and safety. They also have a strong need for belonging/ community/ fitting in and being seen as 'cool'. Public health or other social campaigns targeting them would need to address their focus on popularity, role models and community in identifying key influencers.
- Parents are the main influencers for their children's health-related choices; in order to reduce child obesity and encourage health improvement, resources and campaigns need to target families as a whole.
- Health services targeted at prevention and self-care are seen as very important in the community; as are services for vulnerable people: children, the elderly and those living with learning disabilities.
- The Barkantine midwife-led birthing unit is seen by many residents as a desirable place to give birth; however, many are concerned about the lack of immediate access to specialist doctors and facilities for emergencies and complications. On the other hand, the RLH Maternity offers trustworthy medical professionals and care for complications, but a less personalised and friendly approach (partly due to over-stretching of a service in high demand). The new birthing unit at RLH may reduce some of the pressure on the Maternity services, offering the advantages of Barkentine in better proximity of emergency care.
- Residents see independence for people with learning disabilities as an important issue. The extent to which Tower Hamlets residents with learning disabilities can live full, independent lives, depends on the availability and quality of public services available to them.

About the event

Aims

This event was part of a regular series of Your Voice Counts events managed by Healthwatch Tower Hamlets. The aim of the events is to allow local people to:

- give their views on health and social care services in Tower Hamlets and how they could be improved;
- talk to a wide range of health and social care providers in one place and get involved in shaping local services;
- think about how they could improve their own health and that of their local community;

The events also aim to allow local organisations who provide health and wellbeing services to:

- work in partnership to engage with a wide range of local people across a range of issues and to share the intelligence they gather to improve services and respond to residents
- support community leadership to take joint actions on issues that affect their health and wellbeing;

Partners involved in the event at the Barkantine included:

- Tower Hamlets Council- adult social care
- Tower Hamlets Together
- Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group
- Healthwatch Tower Hamlets
- Parents & Carers Forum
- GP Care Group - Healthy Island Partnership

This is the third Your Voice Count Event with the previous two taking place:

1. at the Harford Centre in Network 3 Whitechapel, St Dunstan's and Stepney Green;
2. at the Whitechapel Idea Store in Network 2 Spitalfields and Banglatown, Bethnal Green South.

Location

The event took place on Saturday 8 April 2017 from 11:00 am - 1:30 pm at the Barkantine Practice, located in the Isle of Dogs. This is part of the GP Network 8 Millwall, Blackwall and Cubitt Town. The event took place in a room open to the walk-in centre and GP waiting area.

Structure

The event layout was designed to take participants on a journey around the room providing both adults and children with creative space to provide their thoughts and ideas in an as interactive manner as possible.

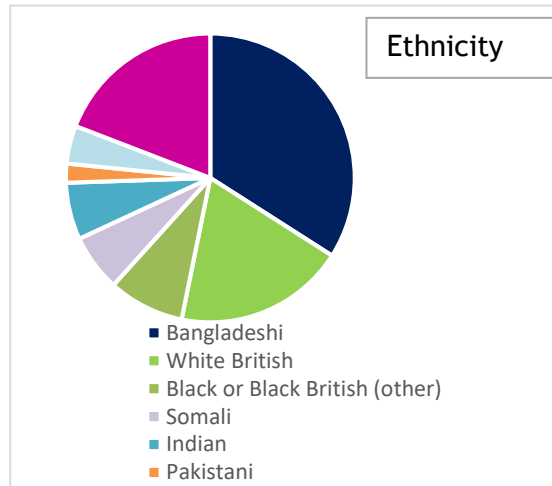
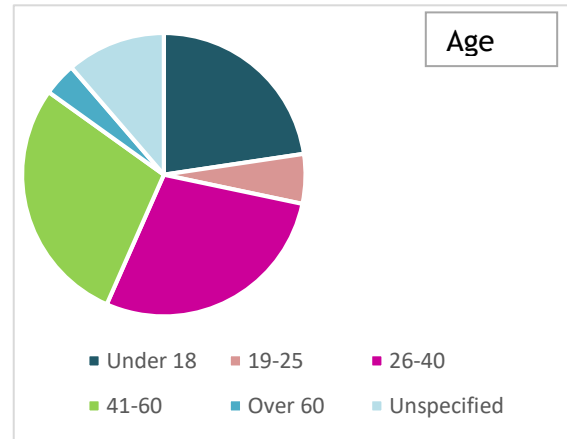
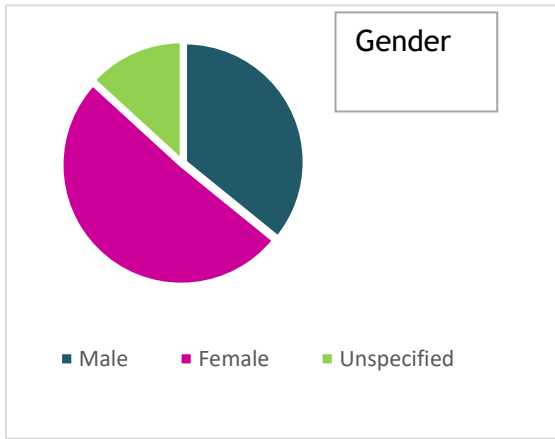
People were given a loyalty style card and given a short explanation on how to collect stamps by taking part in the various feedback stations around the room. When they had collected at least four stamps they were able to redeem their card for a goodie bag and a free lunch. Children also asked to participate in four activities before they were able to get their face painted.

Participants

A total of 53 people registered at the event (12 aged under 18 and 41 adults); including 10 young people who took part in relevant activities. We estimate a further 20 people entered without registration.

27 registered participants were women and 19 were men. 20 were ethnic Asians (16 Bangladeshi, 3 Indian, 1 Pakistani), 11 were White (9 White British, 2 other ethnicities), and 7 were Black (3 Somali, 4 other ethnicities or Black British). Of the 41 adults, 15 were aged between 26 and 40, 15 between 41-60, and 2 over 60.

Date refers to registered participants only.



Public engagement activities

A series of activities were set with the aim of understanding more about how communities could drive change including more people:

- feeling in control of their health and informed to make positive changes
- supporting each other around their health and wellbeing
- taking joint action on issues that affect their health and wellbeing
- getting involved in shaping local services.

You and your health

Activity 1: What would get you out walking?

The two previous Your Voice Counts events indicated a strong interest in walking as a method of: improving their well-being; building community cohesion; and tackling air pollution. We wanted to learn more about how

a successful walking programme might be structured in the Borough.

Participants were asked “What would get you out walking more in your neighbourhood?”

Their answers were noted on a board using sticker dots, while their comments were recorded on post-it notes.



Data analysis from the activities that took place at the Network 2 Whitechapel event shows that Tower Hamlets residents strongly identify “walking as the preferred method of exercising; linked to a desire to be outdoors, in green space, with friends, family, neighbours, other parents etc.”; particularly identifying parks as “very valued community assets, which cut across generations, ethnicities and culture”.

Consistent with these previous findings, participants at this event showed a tendency to think of walking as a leisure activity. Only a small number of respondents mentioned walking to work or to GP appointments. Instead, respondents were more likely to walk for pleasure- either for the enjoyment of walking/ being outdoors in green space itself, or in order to visit local attractions and amenities such as museums, shopping malls, cafes/ restaurants or community events.

Where to walk

Necessary” destinations	Mentions	Total
Shopping	6	
To the GP or hospital	2	10
To work	2	
Leisure destinations/ activities		
To community events	8	
Food/ café/hangout	5	
To the gym	5	29
To the museum	4	
To the library/ idea store	4	
Outdoors games	3	
Natural areas		
To the park	15	33
Sightseeing/ nature	10	
To the canal/ waterfront	8	

Respondents did not think of walking as a solitary activity; three respondents mentioned they would like to take part in organised groups/walking tours, and four mentioned walking with friends or dates. Six respondents mentioned walking with their families or children.

The level of interest in fitness and exercising varied between respondents, but there has been universal agreement that walking is important for your health. Some of the respondents, typically young,

health-conscious people, have mentioned combining walking with other forms of exercise- five mentioned walking to the gym, three mentioned outdoors games, and one suggested that installing exercising machines in their local park would make them more likely to walk there. Some parents expressed a desire for their children to be physically active, and mentioned they became more physically active themselves simply by walking with their children.



Who to walk with

Families/ children	6 mentions
Friends/ dates	4 mentions
Organised groups (incl. youth & faith groups)	3 mentions

Especially for families with children, a weekly family outing travelling by foot to local amenities can be a good occasion to walk. Eight respondents mentioned an interest in walking to community events, and most of these mentioned they would prefer said events to be child-friendly and family-oriented.

The regular family outing as an occasion for walking:

Combined with other leisure activities:

- Children or bikes, roller-skates or scooters, followed by parents on foot
- Trips to museums or local attractions
- Family-oriented/ child-oriented community events

Combined with shopping

- Doing the weekly shopping as a family
- Going to a shopping mall

“When I go to the park, I often just end up sitting on a bench next to the playground where my children play... To be honest, I get more walking done while shopping, just by walking from one shop to another”

A relatively small number of younger respondents mentioned using or being interested in using apps: four teenagers mentioned Pokémon GO and two mentioned fitness apps and pedometers or similar wearable gadgets used together.

Technology that may encourage walking	Mentions
Pokemon GO	4
Fitness app	2
Pedometer	2

Safety or lack facilities can be serious concerns for some Tower Hamlets residents, to the extent that they may put people off walking (muggings, drug use/dealing, unsafe roads and lack of facilities in parks were mentioned). Activity participants tended to see walking as *a community activity, or a means of connecting with their communities*. Conversations held at the event suggested that respondents would be *more likely to walk* if their community offers useful amenities, engaging attractions, beautiful natural landscapes and a safe environment; and conversely *less likely to walk* if they feel unsafe or if they feel there is not much to see or do locally.

Concerns and obstacles to walking	Mentions
Weather	6
Time/ energy	2
Crime/ general safety	2
Road safety	1
Improper facilities/ spaces	1

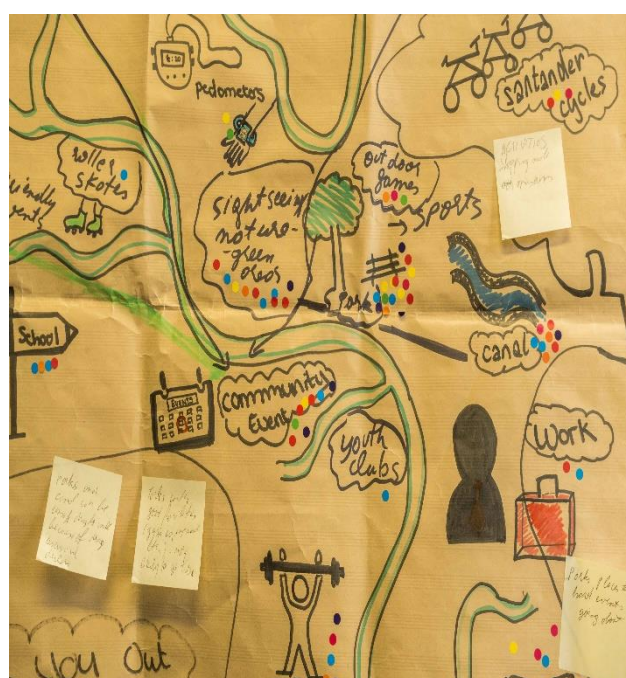
“I depend too much on my car and I struggle to find the energy to walk. I don’t have a lot of time-how can I fit in my routine.”

“The parks and canal area can be unsafe- often in the evening you can find drug users and drug dealers.”

“I have heard of cases of kids being mugged of their phones while playing Pokemon GO.”

“The Weavers Fields Park has no facilities”.

“The parks and canal area can be unsafe- often in the evening you can find drug users and drug dealers.”



Conclusions and recommendations

Consistent with previous data generated at the Network 2 Whitechapel event, discussions with local residents at Barkentine strengthen the case for a **walking campaign in Tower Hamlets**, and provide further insight into *how best to design and target it*.

Families with children aged 3 to 14 would be a key group to engage. Estates, community associations/ community centres and schools could organise family fun days with various activities and games that would attract people of all ages, targeting especially families with children. To the extent that space and planning allow it, various stalls and attractions could be spread out over a wider walking route (ex: in a larger park, along the canal) to encourage walking not just to the event and back, but also while at the event itself.

For young people with easy access to technology and a good understanding of how to use it, *a fitness-type app in combination with a pedometer could be used for a competition between schools or streets*. However, smartphones are not necessarily accessible to everyone- including older people with a limited understanding of technology.

A possible solution would be having an app that can automatically or manually record data from an inexpensive pedometer. Then, a competition could be run through schools, encouraging students to sign up their family members as their team. The students would download the app and would receive multiple pedometers, for their family members to wear. Family fun days would be perfect occasions for giving out walking competition awards and participation diplomas.



Areas that were identified as most important were around:

Health and healthy living (total : 44 mentions- 51% of respondents)

- Apart from the 7 who mentioned alcohol, 3 mentioned smoking, 2 mentioned drugs and 10 brought up topics around **healthy eating and exercise**.
- **Sexual health and sex education** were also seen as relevant topics. 3 respondents mentioned concerns around teenage pregnancy, 2 mentioned STD's and 2 mentioned underage sex.
- Young respondents also demonstrated concerns around **mental health**: 2 mentioned **depression**, 2 mentioned **stress** (induced by exams or otherwise), 1 mentioned mental health in general and 1 mentioned stigma against mental health.

Safety and crime (total 22 mentions,25%)

- 5 respondents mentioned **gangs** and 4 mentioned **fighting/aggression; knife and gun crime** were mentioned once each.
- **Bullying** in general was mentioned 3 times and **cyber-bullying** once.
- Two respondents mentioned **theft**.
- Two mentioned domestic abuse.

Relationships with peers/ fitting in (total 22 mentions, 25%)

- **Fashion** came up 4 times, **public image/ the desire to be 'cool'** 2 times and **peer pressure** 3 times.

- 3 respondents were worried about the **lack of role models** and 2 mentioned **negative influences** from older teens and pop culture.
- Being socially awkward, being embarrassed, knowing the right slang and social media each came up once.
- Emotional relationships, jealousy, bad temper and frustration each came up once.

Friends, community, cultural differences and lack of identity also came up once each.

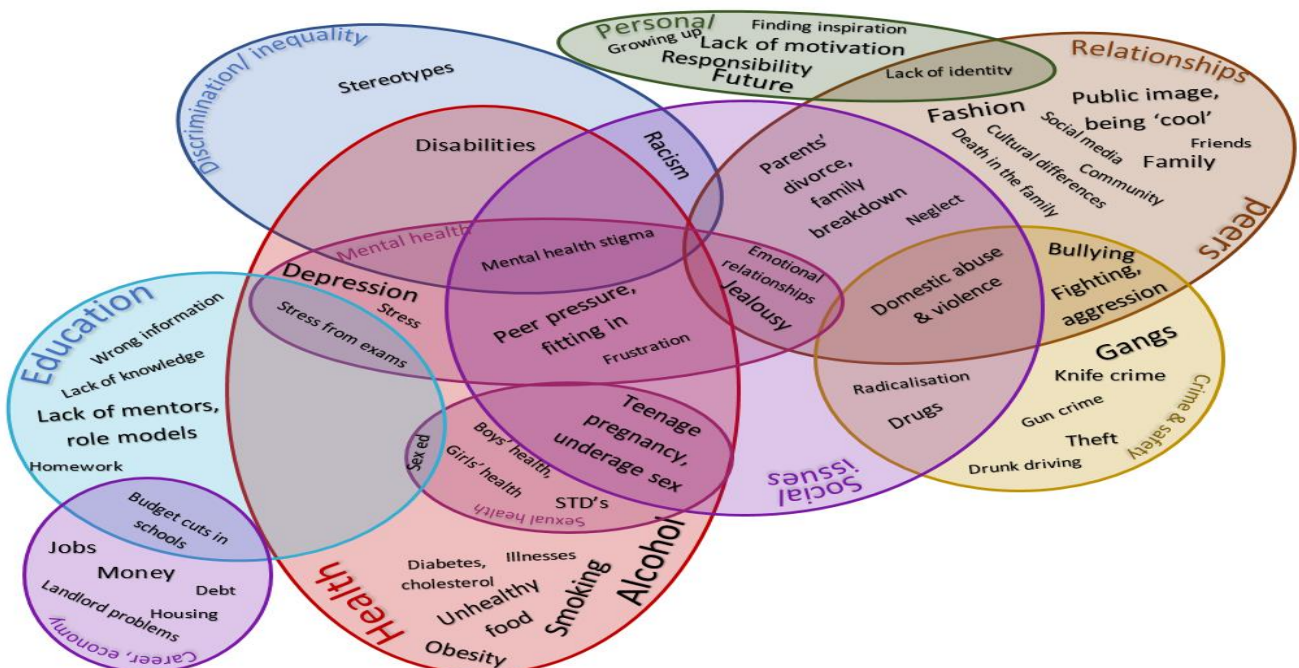
Relationships with parents and family (total 11 mentions, 13%)

- 5 respondents referred specifically to relationships with **their parents**; 2 of these mentioning **parents' divorce**.

Domestic abuse is mentioned twice, death in the family and sibling rivalry once.

Jobs and the economy (total 10 mentions, 12%)

- 4 respondents mentioned concerns around jobs and career opportunities,
- 3 respondents mentioned money and one mentioned debt.
- 2 respondents mentioned issues around housing.



Conclusions & recommendations

Young respondents taking part in the activity show a strong need for safety, belonging and purpose, in a world that they may perceive as uncertain, as they strive to construct their own identities.

Their preoccupation with good health, including a generally healthy lifestyle, good mental health and avoiding illness is central to their understanding of well-being in this respect.

Respondents strongly value fitting in and being seen as 'cool'. They wish for positive role models within their community and worry about negative influences from peers and popular culture.

This could imply that young people in Tower Hamlets could be receptive to the messages of public health and public safety/ crime prevention awareness campaigns, as they already are preoccupied by these topics. However, a successful campaign would have to identify and engage with core influencers that teens look up to and want to imitate.

A community walking campaign, as discussed in the previous section, would have a high chance of resonating with young Tower Hamlets residents, as it addresses their concerns around healthy living, while appealing to their need for popularity and a sense of belonging. Since concerns around safety and crime came up in both activities, this could also be an opportunity for the local police to engage with the public (including young people) and showcase how they are working to make streets safer for all. This could build on the Mobile Police Officer community safety surgeries and ward walkabouts.

Activity 3: Who influences children's health?

Children were asked who had the most influence on their health. Four jars were set up with options of **Me**, **Parents**, **Friends**, **School** and children were given a button to put in the jar of their choice.



Most children felt like it is **their parents** who influence their health the most; highlighting the need for resources and awareness campaigns aimed at parents, empowering them to support healthy weight and nutrition in children.

A walking campaign involving families, as discussed in the previous sections, could be a good example of engaging with parents on the topic of their children's' health as well as their own.

The same activity has also been done on August 4, 2016, as part of the 'Your Voice Counts' public engagement event at the Harford Centre, 4 August 2016. Results have been similar:

	Barkantine	Harford
Parent	22	13
Me	9	7
School	7	6
Friends	1	3



** Values expressed as percentage of total number of respondents for each event*

Activity 4: Tower Hamlets Parent and Carer Council mental health campaign

Parent Champions (parent volunteers) from the borough's Parent and Carer Council talked to parents about the importance of discussing mental health with children and young people. They also raised awareness of their mental health anti-stigma outreach campaign where they can talk to parents and carers in schools and other community settings.

Residents were given information on services to support families, including parenting programmes and promotional tickets to attend an upcoming festival at the Tower of London.

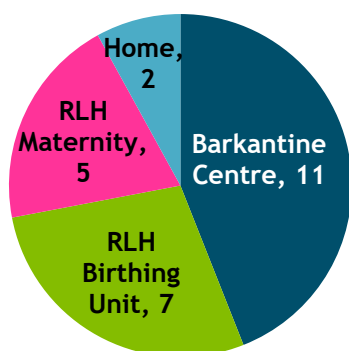
Practitioners from the Tower Hamlets Parental Engagement Team delivered creative activities for children. Nine residents registered to become members of the PCC at the event.

You and health services

Activity 5: Maternity services

Women were asked: If you were expecting, where would you prefer giving birth?

The possible options were: at home, in the Barkentine midwife-led unit, in the Royal London Hospital maternity, or in the newly opened birth centre at the Royal London Hospital.



Home

Advantages	Disadvantages
More comfortable (1 mention)	Complications may arise (1 mention)

- “Comfortable in own house, unless complications”

Barkentine MLU

Advantages	Disadvantages
Facilities & services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water birth (1 mention) - Hypno-birthing (1 mention) - Breastfeeding support (2 mentions) - Prenatal care (1 mention) - Postnatal care (2 mentions) 	No doctors on site (2 mentions incl. 1 first time mom) Midwives often late (1 comment) Admin/ organisation issues between midwives and GP surgery (1 comment)
More comfortable (1 mention)	
Feels homely/ not like a hospital (3 mentions)	
Good contact with midwife (1 mention)	
Personalised birthing experience/ choice and empowerment (1 mention)	

“Midwives at RLH gave a different vibe than midwives at Barkantine. RLH- were clinical and you don't change ideas through tour & conversation.”

“Happy to have; ideal birthing place; home away from home; calmer; different midwives, good environment”

“Pregnancy care at Barkantine good, but midwives often late (even if first appt at GP surgery!) & tension between midwives & receptionists. Breastfeeding team good. Problem may be moving between centres & main GP. Centres not set up/ prepared when they arrive. [...] Midwives have to carry/ bring all of own kit. Why can't they have a cupboard in GP surgery for regular weekly sessions?”

“No doctors on site. First baby, I want to feel safe”

Royal London Hospital Birth Centre

Advantages	Disadvantages
Close to hospital (1 mention)	Bad reviews of hospital may inspire distrust (1 mention)
Doctors on call (1 mention- 1 st time mum)	
Frees up capacity from hospital for lower risk births (1 mention- implied)	
Feels homely/ not like a hospital (2 mentions)	

“Feel safer with doctor on call. Visual appeal- centre looks more like home.”

“1st baby; close to hospital. So long as midwives are nice, supportive and kind”

Royal London Hospital Maternity

Advantages	Disadvantages
Prenatal care (1 mention)	Too busy/ may not have capacity (1 mention)
More comfortable (1 mention- first time mom)	Inaccessible facilities (1 mention)
Giving birth with doctors, not midwives (2 mentions incl. 1 first time mom)	Feels overly clinical/ impersonal (1 mention) No personalised birthing experience/no choice and empowerment (2 mentions)

“Hospital is stressful; like a carousel; no personal touch. My baby was overdue. Clinical, cold midwives. Not supportive”

“Traditional hospital- things could go wrong & I would like a doctor for more peace of mind. Makes me feel safe. Doctors know what they're doing.”

“Royal London was too small; 4 rooms. Could be too busy, just had baby 4 weeks ago. Live across the road to RLH, but took cab to Barkantine”. [Respondent would consider using the RLH birthing unit instead in the future]



Conclusions & recommendations



Home birth is not a popular option. Some women may find it more convenient, but there is fear of complications and emergencies.

Giving birth at the **Barkantine centre** appears to be the most popular option among women who took part in the activity. However, this is not in line with borough-wide data.

According to the Health Scrutiny Panel's 'Review of Maternity Services at the Royal London Hospital' 2016 Tower Hamlets report, "the maternity services department at the RLH delivers over 5,000 births a year [...] approximatively 400 babies are born each year at the Barkantine Centre".

It could be the case that respondents are more likely to choose Barkantine because it's in their immediate local or GP area and they are more likely to be familiar with it.

It is noteworthy, however, that not all respondents were currently pregnant women. It could also be the case that residents find the idea of a midwife-led unit appealing in principle, but would rather choose the hospital, which they perceive as safer, when they have to make a real decision.

This would be in line with the Health Scrutiny Panel's 2016 report's findings that "in 2014 there were 806 women who were booked to give birth at the Barkantine and of those, 402 had their babies there. The majority of women who had chosen the Barkantine but had their babies elsewhere were admitted to the RLH (46.9%)".

Distance from hospital/appropriate medical assistance in case of emergencies or complications is the concern most quoted regarding the Barkantine MLU.

On the other hand, respondents like the Barkantine MLU because it feels homely/not like a hospital, offers empowerment and choice; and comprehensive/holistic services not available in the more structured environment of the RLH maternity.

Giving birth at Barkantine is perceived as being alternative, untraditional, personalised.

In contrast, **the RLH Maternity** is preferred by some respondents specifically because of giving birth with doctors (perceived to be more competent), not midwives.

Giving birth at the RLH is perceived as being clinical, traditional and impersonal; some patients may prefer this approach while others find it alienating.

The **RLH Birthing Unit** may be, in this respect, the best of both worlds.

It offers services similar to Barkantine, with the same personal and untraditional vibe, while in reassuringly close proximity of doctors, hospital and facilities for treating emergencies and complications.

Thus, it could potentially assuage the fears of those who would not consider giving birth at Barkantine because of the lack of immediate access to emergency C-sections and medical consultants, and ease some of the pressure the RLH maternity is currently facing.



Activity 6: Prioritising spending in the Borough

People were given a fake coin, £5, £10, and £20 and asked “if you were in charge of the health and social care budget in Tower Hamlets how would you spend it.” They fed the money through 12 labelled option slots in a box. They were not able to see where other people had spent their money.



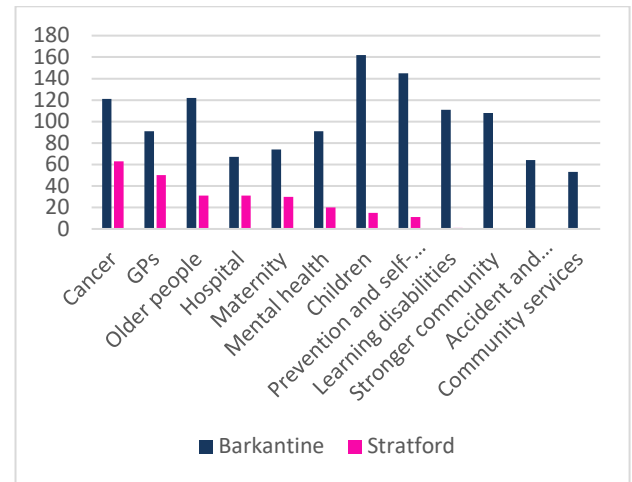
Children’s services were of primary concern to participants, followed closely by prevention and self-care. Hospitals, A&E and community care were, in contrast, seen as less important.

The same question has previously been asked at a Stratford based public meeting organised by Healthwatch Tower Hamlets to inform and gather the views of local people about the draft North East London Sustainability and Transformation Plan (NEL STP).

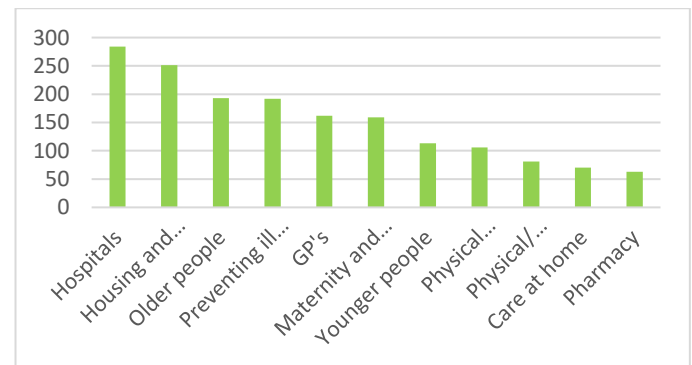


Tower Hamlets residents at this event (who were largely young people) showed relatively more interest in GP’s and hospitals, and less in preventative and community care, or in children’s services.

Concern for cancer and older people’s services have been a point of agreement between the two groups.



The same activity, with different categories, has been featured in the August 2016 Hartford Centre event. The results are more similar to those from the Stratford event than those obtained in Barkantine, prioritising hospitals and GP’s, with less concern for young people and learning disabilities.

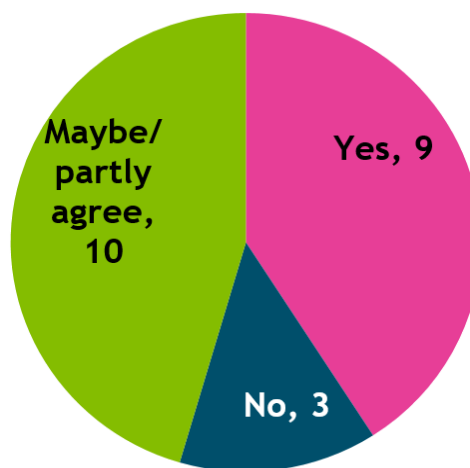


Across the three events, older people’s services appear to be of high importance to Tower Hamlets residents. Home care and community health services are given less importance, possibly because they are seen as already included in other services, such as older people’s, children’s or disability services.

Activity 7: Adults with learning disabilities

Members of the public were asked to agree or disagree with the sentence “Adults with learning disabilities in Tower Hamlets live full and independent lives”. 27 people took part in the activity; out of which 2 had learning disabilities themselves.

Most respondents agreed, or at least partly agreed with the prompt.



Respondents who agree	Respondents who partly agree	Respondents who disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a lot of places to go and support from hospital, schools and community. People do get help and more than elsewhere. But sometimes people still have to ask for help. Support for carers could be better. (3 similar comments) People get help including with special transport to places. People go to day centres by themselves so they can get away from family and have a separate life. It is important for people to have company, to socialise and get out and not be lonely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People need support when they can't do things themselves; they need help from carers and others so wouldn't really be independent (4 similar comments) We want an inclusive approach and there is no distinction for people with learning disability in some activities. Tower Hamlets is often inclusive but sometimes people with learning disability are not included. There are some community centres where people don't feel welcome. People with learning disability feel shy and may hold back. We still need a better attitude in the community. We want everyone together rather than separate centres (3 similar comments) There is an assumption everyone can understand. People have to take time to explain things. There are access issues. People who are not confident sometimes get stuck at home. People who are semi independent need more independent housing. Carers are badly supported, badly paid and not greatly valued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to access health. Health literature is not broken down and often people cannot access services. We have to choose for my brother People need support from services with their needs so it depends on their needs.

We then proposed a list of priorities for people with learning disabilities, based on previous consultations with members of the public in Tower Hamlets, namely that adults with learning disabilities:



26 people agreed. Several specifically commented that all of these were important. 13 of the comments specifically talked about respecting people, including them in mainstream community activities, treating them equally and/or recognising their positive contribution.

General comments

- *We need to look more into and understand why there is more learning disability in Tower Hamlets than elsewhere and links with anti-social behaviour.*
- *People with learning disability should be integrated not separate - as should the support. They should be given support but treated equally. Their voice needs to be heard.*

Are respected and safe:

- *People with learning disability are the same as others and should be treated equally and not differently and should be part of the community.*
- *People should be more respected; children should learn to respect people with learning disability.*
- *It is really important to my brother that he feels respected and safe and is able to participate.*
- *Being able to travel safely on public transport.*

Are involved and participate in local activities.

- *Going out a lot more is important but community centres are closing; a lot is stopping. Want to avoid social isolation for people - they need partnerships & fun activity days. We need to build community.*
- *Activities should be more accessible and geared towards different needs.*
- *Include people within the mosque - and build a wider all faith community.*
- *Day centres are important for carers and for the adult to have their own separate time.*
- *I don't see people out and about - so, where are they? They should be involved more.*
- *Being involved in physical activities - football and basketball - it is important that people are all together.*
- *It is important to be independent - need more space and green space.*
- *Join in general community events - it is important to get out.*

Are happy and healthy

- *Just to have friends is important.*
-

Have choice and the right support

- *Choice is important - people don't want to be different but want somewhere to go and to have support. They want to feel supported but still independent.*
- *People should be supported as individuals, looking at individual needs - it is not one size fits all.*
- *People should work with each other as a team and be able to contribute. They can give and bring much to the community, including artistically. They are an asset - not just needing support.*
- *There is lack of money - dependent on the state - always impoverished and at the charity end of things. It impacts on your capacity to manage things. Things would be different with more money.*

Conclusions & recommendations

There was general agreement among respondents with the overall aim or vision including a full life. However respondents felt that people need support that may not be readily available. For most participants, the extent to which people with learning disabilities can live an independent life depends on the quality and range of services available to them, in order to empower them to be independent.

There was almost full agreement that the outcomes were important. Comments highlighted respecting people, including them in mainstream community activities, treating them equally and/or recognising their positive contribution, recognising the individuality of people and providing support and enabling people to have some separate time away from their family. Non-disabled respondents seemed to value inclusion of people with learning disabilities in their local community and their empowerment to participate in community activities as desirable outcomes.

Both this activity and the previous-one, regarding prioritising spending in the Borough, reveal that services for adults with learning disabilities are highly valued by event participants and seen as an important part of their communities. Maintaining and improving them would have both the practical effect of empowering disabled adults to live fuller, more independent lives; and the symbolic effect of letting them and their families know that their voices and interests in the community are important.



Activity 8: Developing an integrated system: your voice counts

This activity has been delivered in collaboration with our partners at Tower Hamlets Together. We have asked participants to read THT's People Charter:

We aim to provide person-centred coordinated care to all people who use our services. This means you can always expect us to:

- Be polite and respectful to you
- Respect your confidentiality
- Let you know who we are and what we do
- Communicate clearly and openly with you in the way that you need us to
- Respond to phone calls, emails and letters quickly
- Ensure that you only need to tell your story when you choose
- Ensure that we take into account your mental, physical and social needs
- Be informed and prepared for appointments with you and have read your notes
- Work with you as an active and equal partner, jointly agreeing your care plan to include your personal goals and wishes
- Support you to support yourself where possible
- Involve and listen to carers involved in your care
- Involve service users and carers in service planning and evaluation
- If we don't know how to help initially, we will explore other options and get back to you quickly

We value our staff and support them to provide high-quality whole-person care, including mental and physical health, social care and wellbeing. We will work with service users and carers to build mutually respectful and trusting relationships. This includes keeping appointments, exploring self-management (when appropriate) and giving constructive feedback.”

We then asked them to have a look at our ‘outcomes framework’ which has been drafted from discussions with patients, carers and the wider community, including at previous Healthwatch events.

How do we know health and social care is working well?

After using Tower Hamlets Together services we want you to be able to say...

Around me

- I feel safe from harm in my community
- I play an active part in my community
- I am able to breathe cleaner air in the place where I live
- I am able to support myself and my family financially
- I am supported to make healthy choices
- I am satisfied with my home and where I live
- My children get the best possible start in life
- My doctors, nurses, social workers and other staff
- I am confident that those providing my care are competent, happy and kind
- I am able to access the services I need, to a safe and high quality
- I want to see money is being spent in the best way to deliver local services
- I feel like services work together to provide me with good care

Me

- It is likely I will live a long, health life
- I have a good level of happiness and wellbeing
- Regardless of who I am, I am able to access care services for my physical and mental health
- I have a positive experience of the services I use, overall
- I am supported to live the life I want

There were many examples of positive experiences of local services but recurring themes for improvement:

- Not feeling safe in community
- Housing is unsatisfactory particularly communal parts on estates
- Difficulties about getting appointments with the GP
- Too long to wait for a referral
- Need for services to talk to each other more especially social services and health

What's next?

We are determined to continue to strive for more person-centred services with open and honest relationships. We want to make our outcomes real and help to make a positive difference. This will include exploring the roles and responsibilities of all us - patients and carers, staff, the voluntary and community sector and the wider community - making sure these voices count.

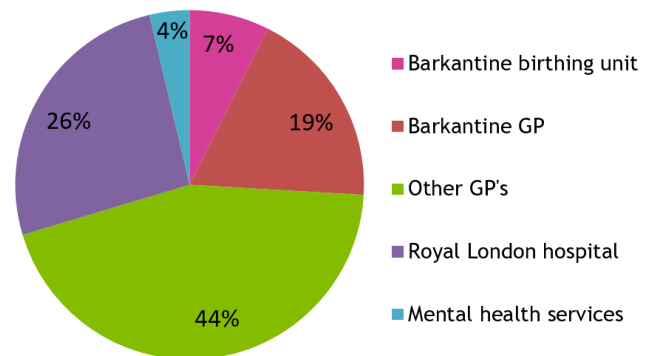


General feedback on services

Apart from taking part in activities, visitors were also invited to fill in Healthwatch Comments and Signposting Forms, to give their feedback on healthcare services in their community.

26 comments were received from members of the public; out of these, 17 referred to *GP surgeries* in the borough, 7 to the *Royal London Hospital*, 2 to the *Barkantine Birthing Unit* and 1 to mental health services.

Participants also had the opportunity to suggest improvements to the services they commented upon.



GP Surgeries

Participants' opinions on GP surgeries were broadly mixed.

- People were generally happy with the quality of services offered by their GP surgeries and with their doctors
- On the other hand, they were broadly dissatisfied with the booking process and the long waiting list; although a Barkantine patient mentioned "the appointment with the nurse is very easy to make", and an Island Health Centre patient noted that waiting times in their surgeries are high if you need to see a specific doctor, but much shorter if you are happy to be seen by whoever is available
- Opinion on the attitude and quality of reception staff was divided, with patients of Barkantine and Island Health Centre seemingly happier about it than patients of other surgeries.

Nearly all suggestions received on GP surgeries were about making more appointments available and the booking process easier; whether through recruiting more staff, more funding for surgeries or better training for receptionists.

Comments

Doctors and receptionists are good and they are making good relationship with patients. (Barkantine Practice)

Good service compared to [Italy] where I lived, I see the differences of standard. I am getting good treatment and explanation. (Barkantine Practice)

I was given the wrong appointment having waited a very long time. (All Saints Wellbeing Centre)

The service here is really good. They have an automatic service. I found the appointment with the nurse is very easy to make. (Barkantine Practice)

I had good service, but the waiting time is often long. They always dealt with the issues and I found friendly staff. (Barkantine Practice)

I'm not happy about the service as I'm suffering from 6 months. As doctors are getting paid, why we should wait so long? They asked to come back in a month, but in the main time nothing happened/ improved (Bow Road Surgery)

They offer a good service overall however the wait is a long time. Sometimes I have to wait two months to get an appointment (East One Health Centre)
Both staff attitude and service are excellent. (Gill Street Practice)
GPs are always helpful and prepared to listen. Although the reception staff think they are expert at everything, but they are not. (Bromley by Bow Practice)

Good service overall, but sometimes you can face delay in appointment. Happy that I got emergency appointment on the same day. (Island Health Centre)

I got good service included staff attitude. (Island Health Centre)

I had to wait two weeks for an appointment. There are only two GP's there working part time. There should be more GP's working fulltime. If the surgery is taking on more patients then it should have more GPs. (Grove Road Surgery)

The overall service is Good service overall, but sometimes you can face delay in appointment. Happy that I got emergency appointment on the same day. positive, customer service is good and waiting time is low, the only note is that we need to wait long to see own GP. (Island Health Centre)

Suggestions



The Royal London Hospital

- Participants' opinion of the RLH is mixed.
- Some patients may feel like communication with medical professionals is difficult or that their concerns are not being taken seriously.

Comments:

The RLH offers a very good service. My mum stayed at the hospital and she had a very pleasant experience

The waiting is too long for hospital appointment. I had my gastroenterology appointment yesterday and they told to come back for further investigation.

Went to the A&E department and found the service to be very good. I was brought by the ambulance service who were also very good.

The nurse at A&E told me that waiting times were 1hr after I had been triaged. She didn't direct me where I needed to go next so I sat another 45mins in A&E. She didn't communicate well enough and could've saved me having to wait for longer. Once I'd seen the doctor I had a different experience. The doctor was helpful friendly and caring. There is a huge disparity between the quality of nurses and doctors.

I was sent back so quick without examination. They discharge people so quickly and then the patient was re-admitted again for check-up as they didn't get treatment the first time. Cost more to hospital.

Suggestions

Nurses need to communicate more effectively with the patient

Get full check up when go for an appointment.

Maternity services at Barkantine and The Royal London Hospital

- The Barkantine practice offers a less medicalised, more bespoke birthing service, but no consultants or facilities for any complications, depending on transfers to RLH.

Comments

I had my baby 4 weeks ago at the Barkantine. I live across the road from the RLH, but after a visit and a tour of the new birthing centre I decided to travel a little more and come to have my baby at the Barkantine. I was 7cm but I still caught a cab to come here. I made my decision because the feeling I got from the midwives at the RLH birthing unit was they were very clinical and not warm. I had a very good experience at the Barkantine. The midwives were very supportive of my hypo birthing and generally more warm. The only criticism I have is that I was kept in for 48hrs when I didn't need to be. I wasn't able to establish my breastfeeding straightaway and so they kept me in. That's one less bed for women and the midwife should not have to be the breastfeeding support as well. It would help if there was a designated person.

My sister had a baby at Barkantine. Apparently, I will have a normal delivery and nothing wrong with baby's health, but I've been taken to RLH anyway. Wished had birth at Barkantine. Are there no doctor at Barkantine?

Suggestions

All the maternity services need to be joined up and not so many visits which aren't explained. There needs to be breast feeding support on site to free up midwives so they can do their job.

Mental health and special needs


- Special needs families appear particularly affected by NHS staff shortages and communication issues with medical professionals

Comments

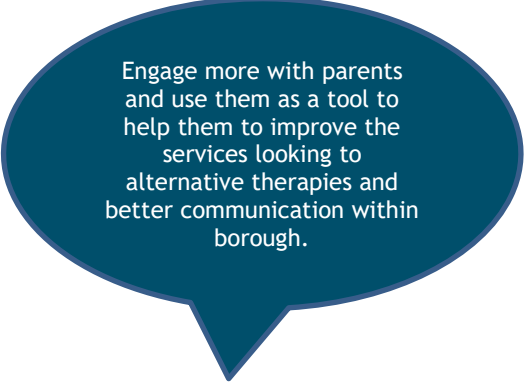
In my experience children's mental health service is underfunded which means under staffed. Only using talking therapies but there are lots of alternatives available which need to be accessible. Lack of communication within the service and lack of understanding towards the parent/carer of children.

It is very difficult to wait in the GPs with a child who has autism and cannot wait. Try to understand why doctors run late.

Suggestions



Allow [children with special needs] to move up the queue [in GP surgery] or provide accurate appointment time.



Engage more with parents and use them as a tool to help them to improve the services looking to alternative therapies and better communication within borough.

Future Events

If you would like more detail on the information contained in this report or would like to be involved in future Your Voice Counts events please email info@heathwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk.

Appendix 1: full list of young people's concerns (activity 2)

Note	No. of mentions
Alcohol	7
Gangs	5
Fashion	4
Fighting/ aggression	4
Unhealthy food	3
Lack of mentors/ role models	3
Teenage pregnancy	3
Bullying	3
Jobs	3
Peer pressure, fitting in	3
Money	3
Racism	3
Future	3
Smoking	3
Status/ public image	3
Stereotypes	2
Drugs	2
Responsibility	2
Obesity	2
Family	2
Depression	2
Disabilities	2
Stress from exams	2
Parents' divorce, family breakdown	2
Underage sex	2
Personal hygiene	2
STD's	2
Theft	2
Lack of motivation	2
Homework	1
Drunk driving	1
Emotional relationships	1
Neglect	1
Landlord problems	1
Wrong inspiration from music	1
Friends	1
Housing	1
Weight cautious	1
Being influenced by older boys	1
Too much diabetic + cholesterol	1
Boys' health	1
Lack of knowledge	1
Radicalisation	1
Wrong information	1
Education	1
Girls' health	1

Abuse from family	1
Domestic violence	1
Budget cuts in schools	1
Exercise, keep fit	1
Jealousy	1
Lack of identity	1
Owing people money	1
Parents wanting their child to do good	1
Parents views on things	1
Social media	1
Illnesses	1
To find inspiration	1
Cultural differences	1
Death in the family	1
Frustration	1
Stage fear	1
Mental health	1
Growing up	1
Stress	1
Cyber bullying	1
Community	1
Socially awkward	1
Bad temper	1
Sibling rivalry	1
Being embarrassed	1
Dialogue between school & family	1
Stigma against mental health	1
Safety	1
Knowing the right slang	1
Knife crime	1
Gun crime	1
Gym	1
Make awareness young mind	1
Parental responsibility	1
Puberty	1
Safe parks	1
Sex education	1
Healthy eating	1
Work experience, opportunities	1