

Annual Report 2022-2023



Societyinks
Tower Hamlets

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Foreword from the Chair

This year has been a huge success for SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets and I feel proud to have been part of its leadership team.

SocietyLinks has delivered a wide range of exciting projects that have achieved excellent outcomes. Our work in the City of London with Afghan families particularly stands out. It showcased the depth of skill among the staff and their passion and dedication to help others and improve life opportunities. This year we also saw the departure of our long-standing Director and Management Committee member, Abdul Hoque Habib. We wish him all the best for his future endeavours and thank him for his time and dedication during his time with us.

I look forward to another year of innovative ideas and success stories in 2023/24 and am excited to see how SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets continues to develop.



Sharon Barbour

Project Manager's Report

We have had an exciting year starting our City of London youth projects and taking on the delivery of the resettlement programme with Afghan families. Both of these were fantastic opportunities that allowed us to display our strengths in understanding the community and residents' needs, and tailoring services to meet their needs.

Our staff were able to break down barriers, form positive relationships, and have successful engagement with hard-to-reach children and young people facing complex issues and trauma. We created a video in celebration of our achievements and the outcomes achieved by our Afghan service users during their time with us that we hope to share more widely this year.

The coming year will see the launch of our interactive cooking programme, funded by Global Make Some Noise. This exciting project will enable us to reach a very wide spectrum of families and produce robust, positive outcomes.

We have prioritised specific issues to tackle next year, one of them being isolation among the elderly and parents of young children. We will also be focusing on increasing services for men having identified a need for this locally.

I look forward to another busy year, working with existing and new service users, supporting them to access new opportunities.



Joyce Archbold

About SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets is a vibrant community-based charity located in a community building on the Whitechapel Peabody Estate. Our mission is to address the needs of underprivileged local residents through creating opportunities and providing practical support. Our projects and services aim to empower local people to achieve tangible, positive change in their lives and those of their families. Our vision is to be a sustainable pillar within the community, providing ongoing services for all residents and developing innovative, new projects to meet the changing needs of the local population. We aim to engage with local residents and build their confidence, capacity and wellbeing. We want to show them the wealth of opportunities around them and how they can connect with these. SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets works in partnership with other organisations to maximise our efficiency and output. We deliver services across the borough from a variety of venues and reaching out to neighbouring boroughs.

Core values

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets actively challenges discrimination and welcomes residents from all sections of the community regardless of their race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, and political and cultural beliefs.

The core values of SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets are as follows:

1. We value the residents of Tower Hamlets as an ethnically diverse community with rich experiences and high human potential.
2. We aim to support residents to:
 - a) Help one another to live more fulfilling lives by securing better futures
 - b) Live healthy lives in a safe and comfortable environment
 - c) Participate in the life of the community
 - d) Take part in education, training, and recreation opportunities
 - e) Secure decent housing, employment, and an adequate income.
3. We endeavour:
 - a) To be accountable and responsive to residents
 - b) To be flexible and innovative in the delivery of quality services
 - c) To work in partnership with other agencies whenever possible and appropriate
 - d) To oppose discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender, age, sexuality and disability.

A brief history of SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets was established in 2010. Its founders were passionate about offering opportunities to disadvantaged people in the local community to help support them to achieve better outcomes for themselves. The service began with the delivery of youth services and English classes for beginners and was run wholly through the time and efforts of dedicated volunteers. This enabled SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets to develop a foundation within the community and start applying for funding to increase its services and deliver other projects to meet the needs of the service users. Over the years the services have developed according to the needs of the locals and SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets is now a firm pillar in the local community.

Legal status

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The management constitutes two directors and a Management Committee made up of 11 members with an appointed chairperson, secretary and treasurer. A list of all Management Committee members can be found at the end of this report.

Constitution

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets' constitution sets out the following objectives:

1. To advance education and training for people in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets
2. To reduce unemployment in such ways as may be thought fit
3. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society
4. To promote equality and diversity for the public benefit by, for example:
 - a) Eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or religion
 - b) Advancing education and raising awareness of equality and diversity
 - c) Promoting activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds
 - d) Conducting or commissioning research on equality and diversity issues and publishing the results to the public
 - e) Cultivating a sentiment in favour of equality and diversity.
5. To advance in life and relieve the needs of young people through the provision of:
 - a) Recreational and leisure activities provided in the interest of social welfare, designed to improve their conditions of life
 - b) Support and activities to develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.
6. Such other charitable purposes for the public benefit as are exclusively charitable according to the laws of England and Wales as the trustees may from time to time determine

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets in 2022-2023

This year has seen a lot of changes in how we deliver our services due to greater and evolving demand. We have had increased requests for health-related services and development programmes. The building has returned to pre-pandemic levels of activity and is once again very busy six days a week with a wide range of services on offer for a very varied spectrum of service users. We have introduced new projects this year such as our SEND stay-and-play sessions and our older people's group. We have also been planning the launch of our online interactive cooking programme in May 2023.

A key highlight for this year has been the chance to talk on LBC radio with Nick Ferrari and the Capital Xtra Breakfast Show, raising awareness about the key issues we are targeting and our campaigns.

Key issues

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets works closely with the community and has an in-depth understanding of and insight into the needs and difficulties faced by local residents. The community is still reeling from the after-effects of the pandemic, with many households trying to stabilise their household incomes and health. Secure employment for low-skilled individuals has become difficult to come by and the demand is ever increasing. We have many residents who are struggling with the long-term effects of Covid-19 and its impact on their mental wellbeing. Another key issue for local people has been access to healthcare services. Changes in the NHS system and the digitalisation of all services have put many people at a disadvantage when trying to access help. Our young people have faced the challenge of sitting public exams after two years of disrupted schooling, the added pressure of which has led to anxiety and fear among students and their families.



Outcomes at a glance: 2022/23

- Residents have accessed targeted online employment support resulting in tangible progress towards sustainable employment.
- Residents have accessed pre-ESOL support resulting in increased literacy, confidence and independence.
- Young people have engaged in online and face-to-face youth club sessions with access to positive, constructive activities, educational workshops, sport and trips.
- Older people have attended weekly sessions at the centre where staff have been able to support them with issues.
- Vulnerable local residents and families have accessed free food packs.
- Local families with babies have accessed stay-and-play sessions receiving support and guidance on early development.
- Women have participated in online and face-to-face exercise classes and workshops, boosting their confidence and improving their physical health.
- Women have attended digital inclusion sessions and have gained skills to help them and their families overcome digital barriers.
- Households without access to digital devices have received devices to support educational attainment, progress and inclusiveness.
- Young people have gained certified qualifications through online training courses, increasing their employability and confidence.
- Young people have completed work experience and volunteering through the Summer Project gaining confidence, skills and knowledge.
- Young people have become more aware of the risks of knife crime and have developed skills to handle challenging peer-group situations.
- Girls and young women have gained confidence and new skills through workshops and activities.
- There is a greater sense of cohesion within the community, developing positive relationships /-among residents and a stronger sense of belonging to the locality.

*Children and young people have accessed online support with their school work and exam preparation, resulting in higher attainment in public exams.

A year in figures: what we've achieved

Between April 2022 and March 2023:

- **1,645** residents used SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets' services
- **521** residents attended a SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets' community event
- **534** young people aged 8-19 years engaged with SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets
- **48** adults and young people took part in accredited training
- **80** residents received employment support (of whom 35% gained a job)
- **67** volunteers supported SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets, including the Management Committee, young people gaining work experience, and residents of all ages helping at one-off events and regular sessions
- **£440,000** of funding was secured by SocietyLinks to continue delivering projects and services.

Financial statement

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets ended the 2022/23 financial year in a robust financial position with continuing longer-term funding in place and a strong reserve position, as demonstrated by our annual accounts. We have continued our pro-active fundraising strategy – through our strong community connections and responsive planning. We accessed funding for projects in line with the dynamically changing needs of the community while continuing to increase our annual income year on year despite the funding difficulties faced by the entire charity sector during the Covid pandemic and beyond.

We continue to have strong reserves above our reserve policy requirement although we did have a small reduction this year as expected due to some project delivery prior to covid being delayed into the 2022/23 financial year. We have sufficient reserves to maintain a minimum of four months of our existing services in case of a shortfall or delay in income from grants.

Longer-term funding

We have multi-year funding in place for most of our larger projects having successfully applied for further long-term grant funding

Through new funding provided by the City of London we have been able to provide new and existing services to new communities further away from our centre. We have always recognised that long-term funding is key to giving our service users and skilled staff confidence in our service continuity. This has enabled us to build trust and long-term relationships with new and existing users of our services.

The charity funding environment continues to be under great pressure as we continue in a post-Covid world where the lasting cost of the pandemic is continuing to constrain public and private funding for the charity sector. Similarly, the cost-of-living crisis is impacting all sectors of society; it is constraining funding availability while causing the needs of service users to grow rapidly. We already have funding in place for most of our projects in the medium term and we are confident we can access further funding to secure the longer-term provision of our existing services.

Forecast

In 2023/24 funding will continue to be a priority and challenge for SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets, as is the case for the entire charity sector, particularly considering the difficulties of the post-Covid funding environment where the costs of the pandemic are still being counted by all sectors of society. Alongside this, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is continuing to acutely affect our service users who are amongst the hardest hit.

We are confident that given our successful performance, specifically through the pandemic period and the immediate aftermath, funders will feel confident to support us even more despite the tightening funding environment.

We aim to further consolidate our position while continuing our expansion into other community centres and service areas through taking on larger-scale and longer-term projects. Our financial aim for 2023/24 is to secure larger, multi-year grants of between £80,000 and £200,000 across three-year funding periods to finance our long-term projects and to give the organisation longer-term stability and consistent growth.

Community services

Job club

This year we were fortunate to have the funding for our job club extended by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). This meant we could work with more people, which was especially valuable at a time when people were struggling financially and looking for second jobs or experiencing added pressure from job centres putting more stringent demands on claimants. Many people had been made redundant and were desperate to get back into work. We were able to provide help with writing CVs and personal statements, interview practice, sending people to job fairs, and supplying volunteering opportunities for people looking for work experience. People struggling with their English language skills were referred to our ESOL classes. We enrolled more than 30 people in childcare training and many of them now are in employment.



Better Jobs

Better Jobs has been a very productive project, not only offering support to people looking to improve their employment but also providing training. The budget is generous so we have been able to offer training around first aid and individual tailored training courses that have helped improve people's skills and raised their prospects of finding a better job. Furthermore, Trust for London offered extra uplift money which enabled us to provide extra resources and offer refreshments for people who were struggling to afford meals. This 'warm hub' approach encouraged service users to spend more time at the centre, where they had access to free WiFi and heat during the winter months, and could continue looking for work.

Digital Divide

This year we continued to provide a digital support service because we recognised the need to address the digital divide and support people to overcome the barriers they face on a daily basis due to their lack of computing and technology skills. Our sessions provided basic support such as setting up an email account, writing and responding to emails, setting up passwords, searching the internet for retail purposes and completing online forms. We also provided access to IT training courses that could be completed online.

We continued to work with ELBA and distributed more digital devices to households where several children were sharing one device to improve access to school work.

Exercise and fitness

We ran several yoga programmes this year because there had been an increase in demand; we provided online and in-person classes. This hybrid delivery was very popular among local women who generally struggle to find time to join a class at the gym or lack the confidence to go to a health centre due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the settings.

Insanity Fitness was held on a Tuesday evening at the centre. The sessions were aimed particularly at men, offering cardio and strength sessions to improve fitness and strengthen inner core muscles, as well as to provide an opportunity for local men to socialize and talk about healthy lifestyles with people with similar goals. Local men had been reporting a high number of diagnoses of high cholesterol and diabetes, so these sessions were introduced to help reduce the causes of this through activity and increased physical fitness.



Fisher Foods

This year, due to the rising costs of living, we adapted our food co-operative service to become a food distribution programme. We were supported by LBTH and the Felix Project with deliveries of food items as well as household, hygiene and cleaning products. We reached approximately 120 households through the project, ranging from families that are vulnerable due to being a single-parent family, illness, loss of income or mobility issues.

Families gave highly positive feedback, making comments like “food items such as cereals and fresh vegetables have been a lifeline”. They also commented that the household items such as personal hygiene products would last them a few weeks and that one collection of items would last them a while.

-Due to the sheer demand and unpredictability of the deliveries we also secured further funding to enable us to buy basic food items such as chickpeas, sugar, cooking oil and onions to enrich the food packs.



London & Quadrant (L&Q) women's and older people's sessions

We were funded to run a women's session and an older people's group in the Swedenborg Park area. The sessions aimed to tackle isolation and loneliness and help individuals engage in the community. The sessions were very popular and with games and refreshments on hand the sessions became part of attendees' weekly diary. Older people enjoyed playing games together such as bingo and card games, while the women enjoyed activities such as arts and crafts. The women's group also supported the older people's session as volunteers, providing conversation and company to the older attendees.

Queen's Jubilee

This year saw the late Queen Elizabeth II celebrate her Jubilee and SocietyLinks joined the celebrations with a street party for our local community. We had a BBQ serving burgers, cold drinks and a humungous cake to top it all off. We even had a surprise visit from a special guest who posed for photos with everyone. Our younger community members were kept busy with the bouncy castle and craft tables and everyone also got to plant seeds to take home and grow themselves. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended and was a show of great community spirit.



Global Make Some Noise

SocietyLinks made an appeal to Global Make Some Noise as part of their funding application process to support our service users through the rising cost of living with a budget cooking programme, budgeting skills course and pre-ESOL and literacy support, having identified these issues as barriers for people facing food poverty. Our project was chosen as one of the finalists and we were asked to go and support the fundraising campaign live on radio from Leicester Square. Our team and youth volunteers appeared on the Capital Radio Xtra Breakfast Show and on LBC radio with Nick Ferrari. The experience was amazing for the whole team and our efforts helped to raise funds that then led to our project being successfully granted funding for a two-year programme. We look forward to starting this exciting and innovative new project in the coming year.



Family seaside trips

This summer we organised three coach trips to the seaside for local families. We visited Margate, Brighton and Clacton beaches where families were able to enjoy the sand and sea and have picnics on the coast. These trips were hugely popular and gave families who otherwise would not have been able to take their children away during the holidays a chance to have an enjoyable day trip out of London.

City of London Afghan Resettlement Programme

SocietyLinks was approached by the City of London Corporation with a proposition to support newly arrived Afghan refugees who were settling into a bridging hotel. The initial proposition was to provide play services for the young people and children. We accepted the challenge.

Delivery began with basic play sessions with toys and activities for under 5s and parents where staff built up a positive rapport with families and observed cultural and social aspects of their parenting. Staff then organised to take them out on walks in the local area with their families, building their confidence, helping them to meet people, taking them to markets and mosques, and showing them the general etiquettes of daily living in the UK.

We slowly expanded our delivery to provide after-school clubs and activities for 8-13 year olds and 13-19 year olds. The young people enjoyed study support, playing games and most of all doing arts and crafts activities.

It was originally intended as a short-term project, but because the demand was high and the City of London recognised our success, we were given further contracts to extend the programme to provide Saturday clubs, more study support sessions and more after-school clubs and holiday programmes.

We worked with approximately 150 children over the year and facilitated opportunities for them to experience new things and introduced them to life in the UK through the provision of seaside trips during the summer, arts and crafts projects, local trips to parks and heritage sites, bowling, cinema, BBQ parties and Jubilee parties.

The programme presented some unique challenges: firstly, there was the language barrier. Luckily multiple members of our team were able to communicate with them in Urdu, which the refugees found very comforting and reassuring. Newly arrived and having been through war and traumatic events, it was a difficult time for the refugees – and for our staff team; there was a lot of emotion to be dealt with and faced. Our staff, some of whom were able to relate to the Afghans being refugees themselves, used their experience, knowledge and passion to help these families and offer them the best possible service.

The City of London Corporation has praised SocietyLinks for our efforts and the standard of service delivery portrayed during this programme.



Training Hub

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets has built a partnership with training providers London Learning Consortium (LLC) to deliver courses such as ESOL and Childcare for our local residents from the centre. Two cohorts finished their course this year and subsequently found employment or embarked on further training.

Pre-ESOL

Our pre-ESOL sessions have been in high demand and we continued to run these sessions this year after securing some funding. We had a waiting list for spaces and had two cohorts undertaking the course consecutively. The sessions have had amazing outcomes including seeing progression onto ESOL, confidence in speaking, enabling independence and communication, and the gaining of first literacy skills for many individuals.



Staff training

We continue to develop our staff through training opportunities and workshops. All staff are given mandatory training in health and safety, first aid, fire safety and safeguarding. These are further developed through extended training courses to supplement roles and projects such as training in Autism awareness, dealing with difficult behaviour, Prevent and radicalisation, and mental health awareness.

The capacity-building fund from the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) enabled further development of the staff team. Four members of lead staff have completed Prince 2 training, which has equipped them with extensive knowledge and skills in project management and is an internationally recognised qualification. Four staff members will undertake counselling training funded by CAF next year.

All staff also shared opportunities to attend seminars and workshops provided by external organisations such as CAF, London Youth and the London Community Foundation. Some of these are exclusive events for grant holders and give great insight into organisational capacity building, developing skills to enable productivity and further project ideas.



Women's Services

Girls Group

Our Girls Group was relaunched this year after being closed during the pandemic. The sessions had always been very popular before the pandemic and demand for the sessions to resume was very high. The sessions started off in the community garden where the girls took part in planting activities as well as arts and crafts and workshops. With the arrival of the colder weather the sessions moved indoors and activities included cooking healthy snacks.

The sessions attract approximately 30 attendees aged 8-18 years each week. The popularity of the sessions demonstrates the need in the community and the importance of providing female-only spaces for young women to be able to express themselves openly without the fear of judgement or embarrassment. The sessions helped facilitate peer mentoring and support with the senior girls taking on responsibility for the younger girls.

This project is a core service and has continued to run successfully for many years now. Due to its success we have developed a similar programme in the City of London, which is also proving to be very popular.



Commit 2 Being Fit

This programme was a girls-only project devised from previous pilot programmes using Fitbits to engage young people and encourage increased physical activity. The aim of the programme was to encourage young girls to actively engage in physical activity to help improve their stamina, increase their physical fitness, and support their mental wellbeing through stress release and the feel-good factor of completing targets. The project provided participants with a FitBit which was monitored through an app by youth workers. The participants competed with others on scoreboards and achieved personal milestones through increasing their daily steps and activity.

Participants attended weekly workshops on health and wellbeing-related topics such as anxiety, healthy eating, exercise routines and relaxation techniques. They also participated in an exercise session with a trained tutor who delivered an array of exercise methods including intense cardio workouts, yoga and stretching, Zumba and dance.

The app also helps young women to monitor their menstrual cycles and the changes that this causes within their bodies and to their energy levels. All this led to participants having a better understanding of their bodies, feeling confident and proud of their bodies, and being able to look after themselves better.



E-safety

Our ever-popular women's e-safety session continued to run every Thursday with support from the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) who joined each week and delivered workshops and discussions on different issues around safety in the local area.

Women were able to ask questions and talk about their concerns or things that they had heard of happening locally. Rumours lead to fear and misconceptions among residents and the sessions with SNT helped to dismantle these with facts and case studies.

Our attendees have made great progress in understanding the importance of online safety, recognising and identifying scams and fraud, and also being better equipped to deal with online-related issues concerning their children. The women discussed online grooming, Prevent and radicalisation, bullying and body shaming, sexting and online relationships.

The service users celebrated International Women's Day with a tea party and participated in competitions and quizzes, all related to women's health and female role models. The event was attended by more than 40 women of different ages, backgrounds and faiths.



Sewing

We ran a weekly sewing session where residents were encouraged to repair and repurpose damaged or old clothing, as well as make use of scrap fabrics to creating new items of clothing. Parents enjoyed reusing items of clothing and renewing them skilfully to use again for their children, such as shortening old trousers to be worn as shorts during the summer, t-shirts and dresses being renewed with some added hemming, ribbon or buttons to add detail, and scraps being used to make hairbands and small items for children.

The service users learnt skills such as cutting to measurement, using patterns, hemming and overlocking using a machine, using the correct settings on a sewing machine and installing bobbins and threads accurately.



International Women's Day

This year International Women's Day focused on inequalities and health issues that affect women in our society. The event offered games, quizzes, competitions and lots of homemade food that everyone brought to share.

Youth services

Youth club

We continued running our youth club this year with twice weekly sessions with activities such as pool, Play Station, arts and crafts, science projects and workshops. The local young people enjoyed having a safe space where they could relax and socialise while also having access to qualified youth workers. The youth team ran workshops based on relevant topics that were affecting the young people and made referrals to external organisations and services where needed.

The sessions were popular among the 10-16 year olds because they were able to enjoy activities independently with peers. The sessions helped to combat isolation among this age group out of school hours. Parents have reported feeling comfortable with their teenagers attending our sessions because they felt they were safe and well supervised. “The staff are friendly and understand my children and help them to do better things that’s why I like them to come here.” (Parent of young people aged 12 years and 15 years who attend youth club)



City of London youth services

This year for the first time we secured a three-year contract, with a possible two-year extension, with the City of London to deliver universal play services. So far we have been delivering one outreach session per week and two centre-based sessions in Golden Lane and Portsoken for two age groups of young people. We have also been delivering a girls group, which has been very popular and takes place late afternoon on Fridays. Our programme is based on themes that are relevant to young people such as substance misuse, body confidence and image, social media, and other national and international themes such as Black History Month, global warming and the environment, and current affairs.

Taekwondo

Our taekwondo sessions continued to be a highly accessible and successful project, with young people achieving gradings and gaining confidence within themselves through structured workshops and personal development. The sessions were facilitated by youth workers and trained taekwondo masters giving all-round support to the young people. The past year saw new attendees join including females and young people with SEND. Older attendees have taken on peer support roles within the session to build their skills and personal development.



Saturday Sports

This programme ran in the park on Saturday mornings to give younger children aged 8-12 access to youth worker-led sports activities. Children were supported with access to qualified youth workers while also improving their health and fitness through active participation. They played a variety of sports including football, cricket and basketball. The attendees were able to learn new skills, practice their skills and socialised with peers.

Study support

This year we delivered study support to children and young people at various stages of their education to make this popular service more accessible and more beneficial. One session each week was aimed at children aged 8-12 years and was run by two qualified teachers with supporting staff. The session provided worksheets and tasks if the children did not have any homework of their own to complete. The second session was aimed at 14-16 year olds preparing for GCSE maths who were deemed to be borderline students at risk of not meeting expected grades. This group was more concentrated and focused and was run by our maths tutor. Thirdly, we ran an online maths tuition service for those who could not attend in person and these sessions were aimed at 15-18 year olds preparing for GCSE or A-Level maths. The sessions were delivered one to one or in pairs and gave the students focused teaching time. The programme ran on a rotation basis to allow new students to join and achieve maximum reach. "I have actually learnt the stuff during the tuition sessions which I didn't understand at school. I don't know what I would have done without these sessions." (16-year -old student attending maths tuition at the centre)



Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

This year we continued to deliver HAF programmes during the holidays, providing a minimum of four hours per day of service delivery, including lunch and activities such as Play Station, football, table tennis, pool, cricket, hockey, arts and crafts (very popular), nature and clay projects and competitions for writing poetry. The programme also gave children and young people access to qualified youth workers who they could approach if they needed support. The programme provided a safety net for vulnerable children during the school holidays, providing children with a free meal and activities under the supervision of youth workers.



Stay-and-play sessions

After carrying out a consultation, it came to our attention that there was a demand from parents with children under 5 for a service that helped with social interaction and integration. Many stated that they had become isolated during the Covid-19 lockdowns and that it had affected their children's and their own social life. Furthermore, local children's centres did not have capacity to provide services for everyone which left many parents with nowhere to go. We launched our stay-and-play sessions early in the year and were immediately inundated with requests for places.



Our lead play worker is an expert in play services and has over 30 years' experience working with newborns and young children up to the age of five. She was not only able to set up an excellent session for the babies, but provided talks about child development to inform and reassure parents. The sessions have been really popular and diverse with multicultural service users in both the SocietyLinks Centre and in Raine's House. We have received a lot of good feedback and praise from parents saying the sessions have improved their mental health and confidence, and have given their children a chance to mix with other babies their age. Some mentioned how impressed they were with the development resources that were cleverly used in our sessions, such as sand, water, dressing-up clothes, the play corner, books, role play equipment, and musical instruments.

Science Week

One of our staff members worked in partnership with the Science Museum through a Science Week initiative that saw lots of experiments and interesting things happening in our centre. We set up an aquaponics system where we are growing herbs on the top of our fish tanks and our youth club participants carried out lots of amazing experiments too.



Summer 2022

Summer was a very busy time for SocietyLinks. We ran summer projects in the City of London for Afghan refugees, as well as locally for Tower Hamlets residents. Through these projects we reached hundreds of children. We offered seaside trips, local excursions to the bowling alley and cinema, and healthy lifestyle programmes including sport and education around being active and maintaining a healthy diet. We ran a Fitbit programme where young people registered for their own Fitbit and participated in a challenge board and learnt the best ways to stay fit and active. We also provided refreshments because this had been identified as a key need.



Rainbow Links

Rainbow Links continued to run online, offering training and workshops for parents of children with SEND needs. They completed a round of Elklan speech and language training and are planning on further development courses for the parents and carers. SocietyLinks was also able to set up a stay-and-play session for children with special educational needs this year. This session caters for children who are struggling with neurological development, providing access to a safe environment where their habits and behaviours are accepted. They are able to play with toys and crafts with guidance from experienced qualified workers. The staff to service user ratio is very high in this session so parents are very comfortable coming to our session to get the support they need.

Christmas

Christmas 2022 was celebrated with Santa Claus handing out presents to all our young service users, thanks to kind donations from ELBA and the Christmas Toy Appeal. The event was filled with fun and festivities including hot dogs fresh off the grill, popcorn and snacks, as well as competitions and games. The local community were able to congregate and enjoy the festivities, as well as singing and dancing along to Christmas carols.



Staff, Management Committee and volunteers 2022/23

Staff

Project Manager: Joyce Archbold
Office Manager: Rahima Khanom
Finance Officer: Nozmul Hussain
Finance Assistant: Mohsin Amin

Youth Work Manager: Natasha Freya
Youth Work Lead: Joynul Ahmed
Youth Worker Lead: Syed Ahmed
Tutor: Rizia Begum
Tutor: Heather Smith
Project Worker: Bulirun Nessa
Project Worker: Rita Rahman
Admin Assistant: Tahsyn Habib
Admin Assistant: Ruksana Begum
Admin Assistant: Nusrat Begum
Youth Worker: Farhana Kadir
Youth Worker: Betina Wembo
Youth worker: Hasina Begum
Youth Worker: Shahana Nasrin
Youth Worker: Sultana Begum
Youth Worker: Samad Hussain
Youth Worker: Jahangir Rahman
Youth Worker: Rashel Haque
Youth Worker: Angie Brown
Project Worker: Shanaz Begum
Project Worker: Mahfuza Bhanu
Project Worker: Nahid Ahmed
Project Worker: Madihah Khan
Project Worker: Nabiha Habib
Project Worker: Aneesah Rashid
Play Work Lead: Pipeta O'Brien
Admin Apprentice: Mahera Yasmin

Management Committee

Chair: Sharon Barbour
Treasurer: Alex Kind
Secretary: Abdul Hoque Habib (resigned)
Committee Member: Swapna Uddin
Committee Member: Nicole Quotromini
Committee Member: Zamanur Shah
Committee Member: Emdad Hussain
Committee Member: Salma Shah
Committee Member: Mazharul Islam
Committee Member: Jim Ford
Committee Member: Renu Sen

Volunteers

Ian Roberts
Shozwana Begum
Asma Begum
Nazreen Khan
Samid Ahmed
Jasiyah Khan
Ayesha Gulzar
Ambia Begum
Shana Khatum
Ruby Miah
Abdur Rouf
Jannat Ahmed
Riaz Miah
Mariam Ali

Accountant

Earl and Grey Accountants: Razaul Kabir

Partners and funders

Partners

Peabody Housing Association
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Tower Hamlets Homes
East End Homes
Pollyanna Theatre School
Linkage Plus
ELBA
Prevista Training
London Training Centre
Jobcente Plus
Savage Words
Wapping Youth FC
Ocean Youth Connections
Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership
Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park
Community Food Enterprise
Team DJB Taekwondo
Island House
St Mary's Church
Sundial Centre
Swedenborg Society
British Science association (BSA)
London Learning Consortium
JTP Architects

Current funders

City of London
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Tower Hill Trust
Wakefield Trust
Peabody
BBC Children in Need
Awards for All – National Lottery
London Community Foundation
East End Community Foundation
ELBA
Tower Hamlets Homes
London & Quadrant (L&Q)
Souter Charitable Trust
Young Londoner Fund (GLA)
Seven Stars Foundation
British Science Association (BSA)
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)
Derwent
Sheldon Trust
London Catalyst
The Charles French Charitable Trust
Percy Bilton
William Wates Memorial Trust
Julia and Hans Rausing Trust
Co-op Grant
Ashworth Charitable Trust
Canary Wharf Trust
Johnnie Johnson Trust
People's Health Trust
Trust For London
British Science Association
Canary wharf Trust
EMD UK Together Fund
Howden Group Service
The True Colours Trust
The Hargreaves Foundation

Reg No. 07750061
Charity Reg No: 1154824

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Financial statements for the year ended
31 March 2023

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

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SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Name of Organisation: SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets

Correspondence Address: The Whitechapel Centre
80 John Fisher Street
London
E1 8JX

Tel: 020 7702 0901

Chairperson: Sharon Barbour

Treasurer: Alex Kind

MC Members: James Ford
Nicole Quotromini
Zamanur Shah
Emdad Hussain
Mazharul Islam
Salma Shah
Swapna Uddin
Renu Sen

Independent Examiner: Earl & Grey Accountants
Suite 14/2G
Docklands Business Centre
10-16 Tiller Road
London E14 8PX

Banker: Natwest Plc
Plaistow Branch
386 Barking Road
London
E13 8JB

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees/Management Committee for the year ended 31st March 2023

The financial statements laid out in this report on page 3 to 5 have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities Commission issued in March, 2005 and applicable Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 1993.

Responsibilities of the Trustees/Management Committee

As the Charity's Trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and that you consider the audit requirements of Section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993, this act does not apply. It is our responsibility to examine the financial statements under section 43(3) (a) of the 1993 Act. Follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charities Commissioners (under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and;

Basis of Independent Examiners' Statement

The examination of the accounts was carried out in accordance with general direction given by the Charity's Commissioner. The examination includes:

- A review of the accounting records kept by the Charity.
- A comparison of the accounts presented with those records made available.
- It includes consideration of any unusual items if disclosures in the accounts.

Finally, making explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters relating to the accounts. The examination also includes examination of any such matters of evidence relevant to the account of disclosures in the financial statements. It includes assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the charity's circumstances consistently applied and adequately disclosed. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiners' Statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention:


- (1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act

have not been met; or

- (2) to which in our opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Opinion

In my opinion the financial statement as prepared give a true and fair view of the charity's state of affairs as at 31st March 2023 and that the incoming resources and their application in the year then ended have been properly prepared in accordance with general direction given by the Charities Commissioner.


Razaul Kabir ACCA/IFA/MIPA
Earl & Grey Accountants
Suite 14/2G
Docklands Business Centre
10-16 Tiller Road
London E14 8PX

Date: 11th October 2023

SOCIETY LINKS**Income and Expense**

FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023

Income	£	£
City of London	210,815	
LBTH - Local Community Fund	18,720	
LBTH - Summer HAF	24,800	
LBTH - Christmas HAF	9,560	
LBTH - Easter HAF	1,668	
Charity Aid Foundation (CAF)	30,027	
The True Colours Trust	6,890	
Education & Skills	1,500	
The Hargreaves Foundation	16,000	
Johnnie Johnson Trust	5,000	
EMD UK Together Fund	7,335	
L&Q Placemakers	5,000	
Souter Charitable Trust	2,944	
Greater London Authority (GLA) - Young Londoner Fund	4,500	
Seven Stars Foundation	200	
British Science Association (BSA)	1,000	
William Wates Memorial Trust	9,757	
People's Health Trust	9,861	
Trust For London	15,000	
East End Community Foundation (EECF)	10,808	
Derwent	5,760	
East London Business Alliance (ELBA)	4,000	
The Charles S French Charitable Trust	2,500	
The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust	4,940	
Peabody	5,000	
London Learning Consortium (LLC)	21,825	
Howden Group Service	500	
Canary Wharf Trust	3,000	
CO-op Grant	1,003	
Donations	1,042	
Hall hire	265	
Total Income		441,220

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted fund	31.03.23 Restricted fund	Total funds	31.03.22 Previous year
	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Grants:				
All Grants	-	339,913	339,913	330,499
Contracts	-	100,000	-	50,986
JRS (Furlough)	-	-	-	13,656
	0	439,913	439,913	395,141
Other income:				
Rental income	265		-	-
Donations	1,042			
Total incoming resources	1,307	439,913	441,220	395,141
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Operating costs:				
Admin, Finance & Proj Mang		92,216		90,036
Project Staff		248,330		103,948
				-
Equipment, Trips & Project Costs		62,143		61,646
Rent		14,228		-
<u>Premises Cost</u>				
Cleaning		-		-
<u>Administrative Expenses</u>				
Subscriptions		150		125
Training		11,262		4,545
Fund Raising & Publicity	2,870	-		14,560
Insurance		1,013		1,136
Tel & Internet		420		452
Pension		5,374		5,977
		18,219		26,795
<u>Financial Expenses</u>				
Bank Charges	342			24
Governance costs				
Accountancy	3,315			1,317
Legal & Other Professional	3,344			
Total resources expended	9,871	435,136	445,007	283,766
Net income	(8,564)	4,777	(3,787)	111,375

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Balance Sheet

At 31 March 2023

			31.03.23	31.03.22
	Unrestricted fund	Restricted fund	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at bank	117,470	43,794	161,264	224,673
Debtors		51,475	51,475	
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due within one year		(7,837)	(7,837)	(15,985)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	117,470	87,432	204,902	208,688
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	117,470	87,432	204,902	208,688
NET ASSETS	117,470	87,432	204,902	208,688
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds			117,470	126,034
Restricted funds			87,432	82,654
TOTAL FUNDS			204,902	208,688

SOCIETYLINKS TOWER HAMLETS

Management Committee Report

Registered Name & Address: SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets, 80 John Fisher Street, London, E1 8JX
Registered Charity Number: 1154824
Registered Company Number: 7750061

Public Benefits Statement

Introduction

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets as a registered charity is committed to compliance and transparency; it strives to demonstrate its benefit for the local residents and wider community. This statement identifies and sets out the aims, purpose, mission and public benefit that the charity provides.

Our Aims and Objectives

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets is a community-based charity providing opportunities and activities to address the needs of underprivileged people in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs

Through small, targeted projects it empowers people to make significant lifestyle and social changes, and to achieve long-term improvements to their quality of life and that of their families. The activities focus on education and training, unemployment, social exclusion, equality and diversity, and improving the life chances of local people. SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets works towards its vision of being a sustainable pillar within the community, providing ongoing services for all residents and introducing innovative, new projects to meet the increasing needs of the local population. SocietyLinks aims to build strong partnerships with other organisations to maximize our efficiency and output. SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets envisages being able to deliver services across the borough from different venues and reaching out to neighbouring boroughs within London.

Charitable Purpose and Mission

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets' mission is to create opportunities and activities to address the needs of residents, with the ethos of bringing about radical lifestyle and social change through creating practical projects. The Charity's objects ("the Objects") are General Charitable Purposes:

- (i) To promote the advancement of education, training, employment and enterprise support for people in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- (ii) To promote and organise educational and social development of young people who are socially excluded and disengaged from their aspirations.
- (iii) To provide a voice for an under represented generation.
- (iv) To promote equality and tackle exclusion.
- (v) To create opportunities and activities to address the significant needs of deprived and underprivileged residents, with the ethos of bringing about radical lifestyle and social changes to improve the quality of life for those living and working in Tower Hamlets.

Beneficiaries

The overall objective of SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets is to build the capacity of residents on the local estates in Tower Hamlets and create a stronger, more vibrant community that all residents feel a part of and have a sense of ownership towards. We want to help individuals take part in activities, engage in training and work, and grasp opportunities with confidence. We have separate objectives for the different groups that we work with, and we aim to build networks within and between these groups, to create a supportive environment that will sustain personal development for residents.

Public Benefit

The beneficial impact of the work that SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets delivers is demonstrated through the outcomes achieved by these following, tailored projects:

- Youth Services (ages 8-18) minimum 1500 individuals registered as contacts across Tower Hamlets and City of London.
- Study Support (ages 12- 18) & Homework Club (ages 6-11) at least 250 individual children and young people have accessed the services
- Girls' Group (ages 8- 18) 175 girls and young women have attended at least one session
- Tunes Against Knives (ages 10- 18) approximately 210 young people have contributed to the program through attendance in workshops and production of music.
- Sports Sessions (ages 11-18) minimum of 215 young people have attended sports sessions such as football and multi-sports in the park.
- Exercise (women 18+) (Men 18+) 70 individuals have accessed the services for adults across three weekly sessions
- Holiday Programmes and activities (ages 5-16) 630 individual children and young people have been provided with lunch during a holiday period across Tower Hamlets and City of London
- Job Club (adults 18+) 155 adults have benefited from employment support
- IT Class (adults 18+) 60 adults have accessed IT support including completing online courses
- E-safety Sessions (women 18+) & Chat and Chai (women 18+) minimum of 70 women have attended the sessions from all ages and backgrounds
- Stay and Play (ages 0-5) approximately 110 families of varying ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds have accessed the service
- Community Events (all ages) on average each event is attended by 300 people and therefore with 5 events over the year we have supported 1500 individuals
- Sewing Class (ages 18+) 65 women have used the sewing sessions
- Autism/ SEND Awareness Group (ages 18+) 45 families and households have attended the SEND workshops or sessions
- Older People's Group (ages 50+) at least 90 individuals aged 50+ attend our services
- Cost of Living Food Distribution (all ages) 300 households have received support from our food distribution
- ESOL/ Pre- ESOL (ages 18+) 80 attendees across the three classes including pre-ESOL
- Digital Divide Campaign (device distribution for 8-18years) 64 devices were donated
- Training, workshops and courses (16+) 90 individuals attended training courses
- Detached Outreach and Referrals (whole community) 400 households reached through door knocking, canvassing and targeted outreach
- Refugee Resettlement Programme (all ages) 130 families supported across two bridging hotels in the City of London

These projects help to:

- Offer opportunities to young people to engage in educational, diversionary and positive activities
- Encourage positive participation in society and community activities
- Develop the employability of job seekers and support advancement of those in work through training and support
- Facilitate the development of community networks to reduce isolation and promote community development
- Create opportunities/ access to resources and support that they may otherwise not have access to
- Support individual/ families specific needs and disadvantages, implement inclusion and enhance their access to services and signpost accordingly
- Equip service users with skills, knowledge and information to empower them to have a voice and confidence to overcome barriers and make positive decisions
- Develop community cohesion and understanding among a diverse and culturally rich community
- Support integration and resettlement for newcomers

The ongoing success and benefit of these services is measured by their popularity and recorded attendance levels and the positive feedback from partners, service users and wider stakeholders reflects the continuous demand for increasing capacity and longevity of projects.

Charity Commission Public Benefit Guidance Compliance

We believe we have complied with our duty to have due regard to the commission's public interest guidance wherever it is relevant to our activities.

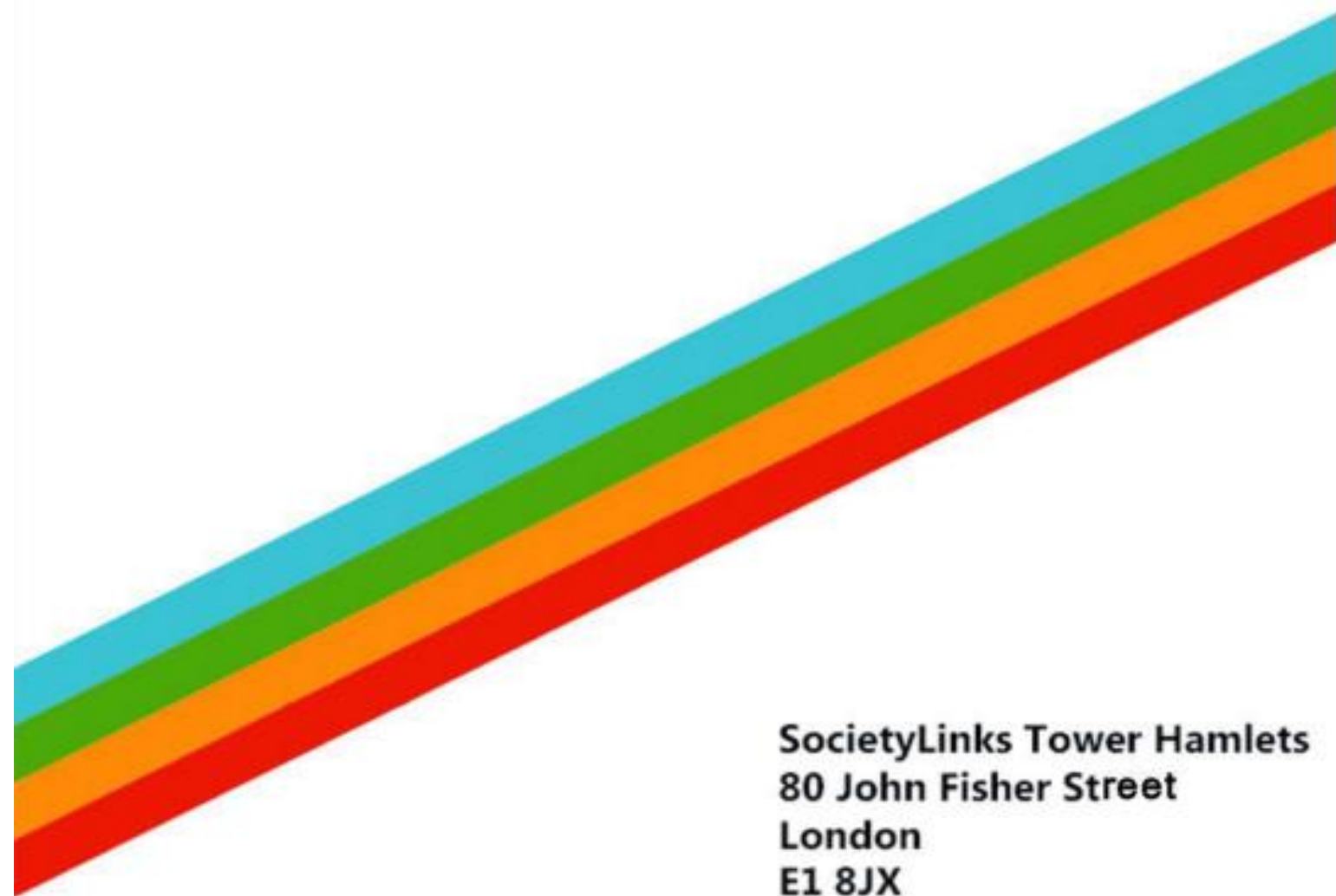


Chairperson



Treasurer

Approved on: 01/11/23



Registered Charity: 1154824
Registered Company: 7750061

SocietyLinks Tower Hamlets
80 John Fisher Street
London
E1 8JX
Tel: 0207 702 0901
E: info@societylinks.org.uk
www.societylinks.org.uk