

# Tower Hamlets *citizens*

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# Tower Hamlets Citizens

**T**ower Hamlets Citizens are a people powered alliance of 14 member institutions dedicated to challenging injustice and building stronger communities. Our alliance includes faith and no faith, educational and community groups. Leaders from our alliance are dedicated to making Tower Hamlets a safe and welcoming borough for everyone who lives, works, and studies here.





# OUR ALLIANCE

Tower Hamlets Alliance  
St Paul's Church, Shadwell  
Darul Ummah & Dawatul Ummah  
St George's in the East  
Community Theology Centre  
St Mary's Cable street  
Community Land Trust (CLT)

School of Politics and International Relations (Queen Mary University of London)  
Centre for Public Engagement (Queen Mary University of London)

The East London Mosque & Maryam Centre  
Salvation Army, Stepney Green and Poplar  
Life Seeker's Aid

Mind Tower Hamlets and Newham  
Tower Hills Catholic Mission Partners (School and Church Centre)  
Coffee Afrique



# Our Achievements

- Iceland in Shadwell joined the Government Free School Meal Scheme
- Darul Ummah Mosque through befriending services, were able to open up spaces for community food banks which were then used to serve 100s of families
- Our Campaign on our pro-Covid Vaccine gained national media coverage
- Queen Mary University of London became a principal members university with Citizens UK. The institution doubled their membership due's from £20k to £40k. Community Organising is now embedded in four undergraduate degree modules in the School of Politics and International Relations



*Shadwell Responds successful video campaign made the Government change their guidance, allowing schools to create their own voucher schemes*





- Five leaders graduated in Community Leadership from Newman University, Birmingham. Huge congratulations to Laura Kekuti, Dr Mahera Ruby, Salma Saddique, Nurul Ullah and Yesmin Begum
- Twelve undergraduates from Queen Mary University of London completed their Community Organising Internship with Citizens UK and recieved certificates from former Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs
- Tower Hamlets Mayoral Assembly in April 2022 was a great success, in which 170 leaders from 14 member intituitons joined. We recieved yeses on our community asks by the Mayoral Candidates on 3 campaigns



# KEY DATES

- International Women's Day March 2023 at Queen Mary University of London
- One day Intense Training for Teachers, Academics and Leaders on the 8th February 2023
- Three Day Training from 14th - 16th March 2023
- Six Day Community Leadership Training from the 11th -16th June 2023

## ***SKILL UP!***

**Whether you're an experienced Citizens UK leader looking to hone your skills, or completely new to Community Organising, we have training and learning opportunities for all. This includes training put on by your local Chapter, free online webinars and national 3 or 6 day courses with accredited placements in Community Organising. Visit our training pages to find out more!**

# WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

**Coffee Afrik CIC- Working Towards a Brighter Future. Lead By Inclusive Community Empowerment. With Growth, Mental Health, Enterprise Resilience & Recovery pathways**



Life Seekers Aid is a charity for asylum seekers and refugees, run by asylum seekers and refugees. Life Seekers Aid worked for the welfare and rights of asylum seekers during the asylum process with cooperating with local and national charities, legal and medical organisations, and official bodies





# OUR CAMPAIGNS

## Mental Health

Phil is on secondment working with national charity Rethink Mental Illness.

The Community Mental Health Framework is accepted by government and the NHS as the ambition for better community Mental Health services. The plan for change is called the Community Mental Health Transformation. The Framework and Transformation is about breaking down barriers between different parts of the system to enable local people to get a better experience of Mental Health services. At the same time a huge reorganisation of the NHS is underway with a lot more power over commissioning of services being held with region wide Integrated Care Boards. The power analysis for Health has changed!! And Telco needs be in that power analysis.

The present campaign has three aims:

1. To deliver develop strategic relationships with the partners in the Mental Health Transformation in particular in the NHS (East London Foundation Trust), the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Primary Care
2. To build a Third Sector Alliance to work with the other partners in transforming mental health services. The Third Sector have a bigger part to play in improving health services
3. To help ensure the voice and leadership of people with lived experience of the mental health system is central to the changes

To meet these aims we have built a growing alliance of 15 member organisations called the Tower Hamlets Community Mental Health Alliance. The Alliance is meeting in person for the first time on the 6th December to plan our objectives for the next 12 months. We will elect Alliance members to sit on the newly formed Tower Hamlets Mental Health Partnership Board alongside powerful leaders from the NHS and the Local authority. We want to ensure that the Third Sector play a bigger role in designing and delivering excellent community services. We have a particular concern what services are delivered with cultural competence learning from local community approaches.



# Youth Safety

Jamiatul Ummah School is an Independent Muslim Boys School, established in 1997. The school has a pupil development programme which aims to build confidence, resilience and leaderships skills for those participating. Part of the programme involves pupils engaging with the local community and working on projects to improve safety and wellbeing.

The Gosling Gardens Project, initiated in 2019, is where pupils from the school, led by the Student Council campaigned to improve safety and access to the park adjacent to the school, which is used by pupils during recess. The campaign involved working together with the local community and especially leaders from different faith organisations, neighboring schools and social action groups such as Citizens UK.

Through various campaigning methods, supported by Citizens UK, pupils held audiences with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets on numerous occasions, both in Town Hall and also inside of the school. Pupils also held meetings with the local borough commander, park safety leaders and students from Queen Mary University to force the local authority to take action to improve safety in the park.



The campaign was halted in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic but was resumed in 2022. Pupils held a final meeting with community leaders and the Mayor to commit to three 'asks': improve lighting, increase police patrol and also explore installing additional CCTV in the park.

Subsequent to the meeting, police presence was visibly increased, the park



# Housing

Over the last 18 months the work on genuinely affordable housing has continued to further projects which have been established for some time and begun working on more affordable housing alongside a redeveloped swimming pool and leisure centre. The need for affordable housing continues to grow, but community-led affordable housing is a slow process which requires commitment. The pandemic only further highlighted the issues of overcrowding, and the growing cost of living crisis is exacerbating the issues of damp and mould in homes when families can't afford to heat them. This is what we have heard through our listening.

We have been investing in the Cable Street Steering Group, supported by London CLT. The team are aiming to build 41 genuinely affordable homes for purchase on a site on Cable Street in Shadwell, with the prices based on local incomes, not on the market rate. The majority of these homes will be 3 and 4 bedroom properties. Already a good deal of design work has been done with the community appointed architects Levitt Bernstein and we have been through pre-planning with the council. Currently we are finalising the finances with Transport for London and the Greater London Authority which has proved a difficult process. Our hope is that before Christmas London CLT can reach an agreement with TFL and GLA for our site.

We have also built a team based on the relationships we built in our action about the future of St George's Leisure Centre in December last year. The St Georges's Neighbourhood Action Team is made up of local residents who are part of institutions within TH Citizens and committed to improving the area around St George's. In August of this year the council

confirmed that St George's would remain in Shadwell which was a big win for our team. We built our power by connecting with 6 local primary schools and strengthening the leadership of local leaders in institutions already within TH Citizens. The Council have proposed that the pool be rebuilt with 27 affordable homes, which again demonstrates the power of local people campaigning on the need for more affordable housing. We are now in the process of collaborating with the council on this project, ensuring the community can shape the design of the leisure centre and the homes. We also want to make sure the homes are genuinely affordable and serve the needs of people in Tower Hamlets.

The final project and team we have been strengthening is the Open Table team who are based at St George-in-the-East Church and who have been working to secure land for 12 modular units for supported accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. We have had some movement on making contact with the landowner of a piece of land banked land next to Tobacco Dock in Shadwell. However, we have begun exploring other small sites that could work for this project. Over the summer we had a positive conversation with the rough sleeping lead at the council about our model of support and the need for it in Tower Hamlets, but we have not had a commitment to finding council land for the units.

Most of these projects featured on the asks at the Mayoral Assembly, however we have yet to build the political relationship with the new Council. We have attempted to connect with local councillors in Shadwell about the pool and have also contacted the Cabinet member for housing and had no response. All of these projects are time sensitive, but particularly the housing project on Cable Street as we need to demonstrate firm political support from the Tower Hamlets Mayor to TFL and GLA.







# **QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK**

Undergraduate students from Queen Mary spent a week doing neighbourhood walks in Tower Hamlets. More than 250 students visited to the East London Mosque, St George's in the East Church, Darul Ummah Mosque, London CLT, Jamiatul ummah school and Mind Tower Hamlets to learn about challenges the community is facing, the campaign they are working and how community organising is equipping community to fight for the injustices they are experiencing.







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**“**Congratulations to all leaders for your hard work and great leadership. The last few years have been very difficult for our communities. The pandemic left many of us experiencing loss, whether that be family members, neighbours, jobs and businesses. The war in Ukraine has brought us immense sadness and the cost of living crisis has been another blow, striking our communities with a sense of vulnerability and insecurity. Yet, despite this backdrop of immense hardship our leaders push on, and our communities did not break their stride for the pursuit of change and power. We continue to build power by developing our capacity for leadership, fostering relations and taking action. It reminds me that ‘we need to act, and not just hope justice will be brought to us’.”

Afsana Salik

Community Organiser, Tower Hamlets Citizens