



ENABLING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN PRACTICE

# Tower Hamlets Our Latest Newsletter (13/01/2020)

## Tackling Child Poverty: an Improvement Approach



**Happy 2020, lovely  
folks!!!**

And *WOW*. You must have really missed these little emails. Just like we, erm, really missed writing them.

We start the year in the voices of networks 5 and 6, who have been working with our coach Julia (who is so good, I want to be her when I grow up) on **reducing childhood poverty**. Something I know will keep your reading. J Over to Julia:

Hello everyone

I'm Julia, one of the QI coaches working in Tower Hamlets. I'm really excited to be sharing some joy from one of the newer projects I've been coaching which is exciting in lots of different ways.

I've been working with Networks 5 and 6 on an ambitious improvement project to tackle the high rates of child poverty in the borough. It is a project which brings

together an impressive range of disciplines across the borough, including GPs, network managers from the GP Care Group, health visiting teams, children's centre staff, colleagues from Tower Hamlets council's Poverty Team and their Public Health Team. We're also working to engage colleagues from midwifery, which will complete our incredible multi-disciplinary and cross organisational QI team. It has been a complete joy to see so many committed staff from across the borough's health and care system coming together to work on something they feel so passionately about.

The impetus for this project came from some of the Network 5 and 6 members last summer, when data was presented to them on the high rates of child poverty in Tower Hamlets. There was also some very powerful data showing the very low take up of two income supplements that are available for low income families: healthy start vouchers and early learning 2 provision. The current take up of Healthy Start, for example, was 59% of eligible households in December, with 1,854 claiming out of 3,121. Though they are a small contribution to a household's budget (each eligible child can access food vouchers worth £6.20 per week), over a year this adds up to a huge £338 per child, and many families in Tower Hamlets have more than one eligible child.

Child poverty is obviously a complex topic, with a lot of different factors affecting it. The data we had on healthy start vouchers helped us focus on something very specific that we could try and change which would increase the amount that low income families in Tower Hamlets can spend on their weekly food, and the access they have to free childcare and employment support.

We've subsequently been doing some community engagement to test our early assumptions and hypothesis, and working on our first set of change ideas, ready to test in the new year, and have been inspired by [this similar project](#) in Scotland. Some of these early ideas include:

- working with midwifery teams on the advice and support that is given to expectant parents
- connecting with the health visiting team to communicate the offer of healthy start and EL2 vouchers once parents engage with that service
- promoting the healthy start vouchers at the local food bank



We are lucky to have access to some amazing data thanks to the council's poverty team, and have engagement from an incredible mix of organisations. Child poverty is

an issue that no organisation can solve on its own, and the biggest asset we have is the commitment from the team working on this: we're thrilled to be one of the first (if not the first!) cross organisational QI project in the borough!

Stay posted for more updates on the change ideas we will be testing out early in 2020!

Julia

What a way to start the year – I ping “send” on this email with a heart full of gratitude. Networks 5 and 6 are creating change more meaningful than we could have ever hoped for. To our continued journeys, and to the difference these can make to those who need it most.

Bring it on, 2020. We're waiting for you!

Virginia