



Information for families, parents,
children, and young people:
Back to school in September.

September 2020



Contents

What and who is this pack for?	3
Resources	4
From London Borough of Tower Hamlets	4
Department for Education	4
Department for Transport	5
Issues	5
Suggested messaging	6
Return to school in September	6
Activities	6
Childcare	7
Free hot meals	7
Free school meals	7
Getting active	7
Information, advice and support for families	7
Mental health and wellbeing	7
School readiness	7
Testing for Covid-19	8
TfL Go	8
Active travel	9
Guidance for schools	9
TfL Go	9
Frequently asked questions	10

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increase adoption of so called 'active travel', which refers to walking, cycling or using a scooter as an alternative to using public transport or private vehicles when travelling to and from school or college.

Please keep checking the website www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/backtoschool and looking at the resources available at <https://towerhamlets.box.com/v/backtoschool> - these will be updated regularly throughout August and September.

Resources

From London Borough of Tower Hamlets

We have collected some useful resources for you at the following address.

<https://towerhamlets.box.com/v/backtoschool>

It will be updated regularly throughout August and September, with new and improved content, that is to support you with your communications with children, families and young people.

Highlights that will be coming soon include:

- A video to build confidence on return to school featuring staff, parents and schoolchildren.
- An animation on 'the big five' changes to schools
 1. If you have symptoms, stay at home and get tested (including how to get tested)
 2. The importance of good hand hygiene
 3. If you cough or sneeze, use a tissue and wash your hands (Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.)
 4. Enhanced cleaning in education settings
 5. Reduce contact with people and mix less
- Social media graphics
- Posters you can display inside and outside of your school or place of work

If you would like to share something you have seen and like, or would like to request something new, please email david.harding@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Department for Education

The Department for Education has created a local authority toolkit, with relevant guidance, information and content to share (live from mid-August).

<https://shwca.se/covid19publicservicecomms>

And, a toolkit to help support children and family social workers with attendance conversations - to help communicate the benefits and importance of attendance.

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/social-work/covid-19/COVID-19-updates-for-social-work.aspx#Informationforchildandfamilysocialworkers>

Department for Transport

The Department for Transport has done something similar showcasing their promotion of active travel.

<https://extranet.dft.gov.uk/safer-transport-campaign/>

Issues

In addition to the risk presented by Covid-19, and the need for myth busting and reassurance, some children, families and young people are still not aware:

- that going back to school in September is mandatory
- free travel for under-18s using London transport could end in November
- of the support available to walk, cycle or scoot to and from school or college
- that schools have introduced various new measures to manage the risk of Covid-19 infection (eg social distancing, one-way systems, bubbles and an outbreak control plan)
- that there is a quick and easy way to get tested, should you develop Covid-19 symptoms

Suggested messaging

We have drafted these messages to support you when communicating with children, families and young people.

They are short and sharp so that they can be remembered and shared easily and reach the widest possible audience.

// Priority message //

Return to school in September

Three things you need to know about the mandatory return to school after Summer.

1. Our schools are safe places
2. A school is the best place to learn
3. We look forward to seeing you in September

Visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/backtoschool for the latest advice and info. on #BackToSchool

[ENDS]

▶ You may want to film a short 'walk-through' of your school to show new measures in place, so that children, families and young people are more familiar with what to expect and therefore less anxious about the return - this can accompany this message, or be a standalone video

▶ Or, illustrate the journey using photos, like the following Holiday Childcare Scheme example, pages 2 to 3 [here](#).

▶ You may also want to hold an open day prior to the new academic year and invite children, families and young people to come and see the new measures in place and orientate themselves to their new learning environment.

// Other messages, A to Z //

Activities

Healthy Holidays (until Friday 28 August)

Download this free booklet full of advice, ideas and inspiration to keep you active and moving www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/healthyactive

Summer Events (until Friday 28 August)

Explore the range of activities on offer to families in Tower Hamlets this summer by visiting www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/summerevents - all events are remote or socially distanced, and most are free.

Childcare

For support arranging childcare when school starts again, or when you go back to work, call the Tower Hamlets Children's Centre team on 020 7364 5277 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) or visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/early_years for more.

Free hot meals

Free hot meals are given out daily in Tower Hamlets, Monday to Friday, 12noon to 2.30pm - until Friday 28 August - visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/healthyholidays to learn more.

Free school meals

If you need support to feed your family or would like to learn more about, or apply for, free school meals visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals for more information.

Getting active

Better Health

Your health matters. There has never been a better time to kickstart your health.

Visit www.nhs.uk/better-health/ to access a range of tools and support.

Change4Life

For easy ways to eat well and move more visit NHS Change4Life www.nhs.uk/change4life

Information, advice and support for families

If you would like further information, advice, support, or simply want to talk about your concerns, call the Tower Hamlets Family Information Service on 020 7364 6495 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm).

Mental health and wellbeing

If you, or anyone you know, needs support to manage or improve mental wellbeing visit www.good-thinking.uk to discover the range of free support, resources and apps that are available.

Children and young people can react differently to stress depending on their age, experience, understanding and more. Read the government's advice on how to best support them during this time <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

School readiness (ages two to five)

For support preparing your two to five-year-old child when starting education call the Tower Hamlets Children's Centre team on 020 7364 5277 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) or visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/early_years for more.

Testing for Covid-19

If you, or anyone in your household has symptoms, you should stay at home and get tested right away.

Call 119 or visit <https://nhs.uk/coronavirus>.

For children under five, call 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk> for more advice.

TfL Go

For support planning your journey on foot or by bike, download the new Transport for London 'TfL Go' app here <https://tfl.gov.uk/maps/tfl-go> - for Apple iOS devices (Android coming soon).

Active travel

Guidance for schools

Transport for London has created a webpage with travel guidance for schools.

Visit <https://tfl.gov.uk/reopeningeducation> to learn more.

This includes:

- A3 posters for primary and secondary schools to use that encourage children and parents to walk, cycle or scoot to and from school
- Suggested messaging for school newsletters to parents and students

TfL Go

Transport for London have launched a new app ('TfL Go') to help get London moving again, safely and sustainably.

This prioritises active travel options like walking and cycling over public transport.

Visit https://tfl.gov.uk/maps/_tfl-go to download for Apple iOS devices (Android coming soon).

Frequently asked questions

These answers, drawn up in consultation with education and public health experts at the council, should be used to respond to the issues outlined on Page 5 and much more.

Please use as a guide to your interactions with children, families and young people.

How has public transport to and from school been impacted by Covid-19?

In mid-May, Transport for London announced the temporary removal of free travel on buses and trams to schools for 11 to 17-year-olds in full time education.

This is most likely to be introduced following October half term, so travel would still be free on the return to school in September until Monday 2 November. Much of the detail is still unknown, and the situation could change, so this is the best information we have right now.

This does not impact on our statutory transport obligations.

Schools will work with Transport for London to check eligibility for discretionary free travel.

Transport for London estimate that 30 per cent of children would [remain eligible](#) for free travel, which would include the following:

- Children aged ten and under
- Children aged 11 to 17 who live more than two miles from their school/college
- Children aged 11 to 17 who live less than two miles away from their school/college if they:
 - have a social worker
 - have an Education, Health and Care Plan
 - are in alternative provision (i.e. educated in a pupil referral unit, or an alternative provision academy/free school)
 - do not have a safe walking route
 - cannot walk due to a medical condition or lack of mobility

For everyone else, using an 11 to 15 and 16+ Zip card, they will be charged half of an adult fare on buses (£0.75).

Children turning 11-years-old should retain free travel until they finish primary school and eligible pupils turning 18-years-old should retain free travel until they finish school that year.

How would you recommend I get to and from school?

Where possible, you should avoid public transport and walk, cycle or scoot to and from school.

If you must use a private vehicle, try to park a few streets away from your school and walk the remaining distance. If you are dropping children off at the school gate, please do not idle - switch your engine off - to cut down on pollution outside of our schools. You should avoid parking anywhere where there are restrictions - look for signage, red lines, single and double yellow lines.

Check www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/backtoschool for the latest advice, information and support on active travel.

What is the status of statutory provision of transport to and from school?

Following government advice, measures adopted on public transport such as social distancing, will not be applied to statutory transport provision.

This is because pupils will not be mixing with the general public. Furthermore, government advice confirms that children may be mixed for activities such as specialist teaching and transport.

Like other local authorities in London, we do not have the budget, capacity or vehicles to allow for transport by bubble. Children will still travel in groups based on where they live, with an emphasis on consistency for students, drivers and staff.

We will continue to work closely with Public Health England to ensure all journeys are done in the safest way possible, and we will be responding to government guidance as it evolves.

If parents would prefer to take control of arrangements for travel to and from school, you may opt for a personal travel budget (PTB). A PTB is a payment made directly to parents to arrange their own transport.

This is only available to families who are eligible for travel assistance, with a PTB being adopted for the long term. Eligible families may also claim for help with the cost of a travel card or a contribution to the cost of petrol, if using their own vehicle.

The council also offers independent travel training (ITT) to children over ten-years-old, see video example of ITT [here](#).

For further information on your eligibility and possible transport option available, call our Special Education Needs and Disabilities Travel Assistance Team on 020 7364 4397 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Why were schools closed?

In late March, Covid-19 infections were increasing faster than anticipated. The government then announced that schools should close to slow the spread of the virus.

Why are they now reopening?

Most schools in Tower Hamlets remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers during lockdown. More schools have been reopening in phases since June, as the spread of the virus slowed down and now the number of people with the infection is low.

What measures are in place to manage the risk at my child's school?

Your school may do several things, including but not limited to:

- Working to ensure that children and staff do not attend school, or get sent home, if they have Covid-19 symptoms - and get tested.
- Regular handwashing
- 'Respiratory hygiene' such as covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing and employing the 'Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.' tissue method, followed by handwashing
- Frequent cleaning
- Reduced contact and mixing including:
 - One-way systems
 - Markings on the floor
 - Bubbles
 - Staggered start and finish times, and more

What is the risk to my child(ren) from Covid-19?

For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from Covid-19.

Children appear to have a milder course of infection than adults. Most children have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. Deaths in children due to Covid-19 are extremely rare.

What is the risk to my family if my child catches Covid-19 in school?

In early August the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), an authority on the health of children and young people, summarised the key current evidence regarding Covid-19 in children and young people.

Highlighted sections of the RCPCH work can be found below but we recommend that you read the full report [here](#):

- There have been far fewer cases of Covid-19 in children than adults - children consistently make up one to five per cent of total case numbers.
- Covid-19 infection appears to be milder in children than in adults - with children presenting milder symptoms or no symptoms at all. Infants and children typically appear to make full recoveries.
- Very few (around one per cent) of those infected develop life-threatening symptoms and deaths are extremely rare (around 0.01 per cent) similar to seasonal flu.
- Emerging evidence from several countries suggests children may be less likely to acquire the disease.
- There is some evidence that transmission by children is limited, with trends emerging to support this claim - but further research is required - studies in multiple countries, including China, of infected families have concluded that the illness was not introduced by children and a study in France found one infected child did not pass on Covid-19, despite being exposed to over 100 people.

Similar studies in Ireland, Singapore and the Netherlands have found no secondary transmission from children in education settings.

Covid-19 infections in Tower Hamlets are now low, so the chances of your child catching it at school are also low. Schools are taking lots of steps to stop the virus spreading in addition to the NHS Test and Trace service which aims to find infections and stop them spreading through communities.

Since March, there have been no cases of Covid-19 in Tower Hamlets education settings. From June onwards, with wider reopening, there have been a total of two cases - introduced from the same household - with no onward transmission.

All the research suggests children may be less likely to catch Covid-19. There have been very few examples of children passing Covid-19 on in schools across the world.

Washing children's hands when they leave school and arrive home can reduce risk further.

What happens if someone at the school gets Covid-19?

The family and the school will be contacted by Public Health England. They will give advice to close contacts and will support the school to stop the virus spreading to other people. The school will let parents know and will say what they are doing to protect the school community.

Close contacts will be advised to stay at home but will not usually be tested unless they develop symptoms.

What happens if my child develops Covid-19 symptoms?

If your child develops symptoms, you should arrange a test right away. If they are at home, keep them there for at least ten days (or until a negative test result comes back). If your child is at school and develops symptoms, they will be sent home for at least ten days.

Other people in your household will need to isolate with them for at least 14 days and be tested too.

Currently, positive test results for Covid-19 happen in less than one per cent of cases, and this number is falling.

If you are being tested, you should support NHS Test and Trace with their contact tracing to protect our schools and communities.

What happens if someone in my family gets Covid-19?

Anyone who has tested positive with Covid-19 should isolate for at least ten days. Anyone in their household should isolate for at least 14 days.

They need to tell NHS contact tracers that their children attend a school or childcare setting.

What happens if I am a close contact of someone with Covid-19?

If you are a close contact of someone with Covid-19, speaking with contact tracers will help stop the spread of infection.

Please do not ignore their messages even if you think you're okay. Take part to help keep our community safe.

Will I be fined if I do not send my child to school in September?

Attendance will be mandatory from September, making it a legal requirement to send your child to their school.

Fines are a possibility, but we want to support families to feel confident about going back to school first.

How will I know if I need to get a test?

Anyone with a new continuous cough, fever or a change or loss in their sense of taste or smell should get tested right away. Visit <https://nhs.uk/coronavirus> for more information

How do I get a test?

If you, or anyone in your household has symptoms, you should stay at home and get tested right away.

Call 119 or visit <https://nhs.uk/coronavirus>.

For children under five, call 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk> for more advice.

How can I reduce risk if infection on the journey to or from school?

Where possible, walk or cycle to your school and avoid public transport. Visit <https://tfl.gov.uk/reopeningeducation> for more information on active travel choices.

Will my child need to wear a face covering at school?

No. They are not currently recommended by Public Health England. We will continue to closely monitor the relevant government guidance and will respond as necessary to any change in guidance on face coverings in education settings.

Do I need to wash my child's uniform daily?

No. There is no need for anything other than proper handwashing and their normal personal hygiene routine, following a day at school (gov.uk).