

Assignment - Component 2

Adults experiencing mental illness in the Borough of Tower Hamlets

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	3
Demographics of Tower Hamlets.....	4
Key issues.....	4
Stakeholders involved in the program.....	5
Digital media and technologies.....	6
Theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.....	6
Legislation and policy impact the support and growth of a community.....	7
Barriers are obstacles to accessing mental health services in Tower Hamlets.....	7
Recommendations.....	8
Conclusion.....	9
References.....	10

Introduction

A community is a group of people who identify with a particular geographic location, and its growth will help address all the social and economic issues that communities face. For example, it can facilitate access to healthcare and education, reduce crime rates, and help build affordable housing. Furthermore, if everyone has a say in the decisions that affect their lives, community development will foster diversity and inclusion. As a result, the goal of development is to improve the quality of life in communities (GVI, 2023). Tower Hamlets is London's most ethnically and culturally diverse borough, with more than half of the population identifying with racialised communities that speak more than 90 languages. However, the London borough confronts severe issues in terms of poverty and inequality, with some of the highest rates of deprivation, unemployment, child poverty, and housing overcrowding in the country. These factors have a significant impact on residents' mental health and well-being, especially in racially and economically disadvantaged communities. Tower Hamlets has higher-than-average rates of serious mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and psychosis, as well as common mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Centre for Mental Health, 2024).

This report describes a community project aimed at raising awareness to reduce the prevalence of adults suffering from mental illness in the Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Demographics of Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a region of central London that includes most of the East End and extends eastwards from the Tower of London. It was founded in 1965 and is located within the historic county of Middlesex (Britannica, 2024). It is an example of a dynamic blend of tradition and modernity, distinguished by a vibrant community with its own culture and identity. The 2011 census results indicated that Tower Hamlets has one of the most diverse populations in the nation, hosting numerous communities, including the largest Bangladeshi community. (Tower Hamlets, 2024). Tower Hamlets was ranked 40th in total population in 2021 among England's 309 local authority areas (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

Tower Hamlets has a population of 325,789. Between mid-2021 and mid-2022, the population grew by 13,074 people, and over the next ten years, it increased by 52,173. The borough covers 20 square kilometres and has a population density of 16,465 people per square kilometre (km²) as of mid-2022. However, over the last decade, this figure has increased by 2,637 people per square kilometre. The population is primarily Asian (44.4%), followed by whites (39.4%), people of colour (7.3%), mixed-race people (5.0%), and others (3.9%). The largest religious group in the Borough of Tower Hamlets is Muslim, accounting for 39.9% of the population, followed by Christians (22.3%), Hindus (2.0%), Jews (0.4%), and others (34.0%) (Varbes, 2024).

Key issues

Approximately 50,000 adults in Tower Hamlets receive primary treatment for depression, anxiety, or serious mental illness. It had the highest percentage of adults suffering from depression and anxiety in London in 2017-18, with 16.1%. Also, GP records indicated that 1.34% of the adult population was more likely to suffer from a serious mental illness. Therefore, there are 147 adults with serious mental illness per 100,000 people; also, the borough has the second highest incidence of dementia among adults over the age of 65, at 5.25%, which is higher than the London average of 4.49% (Tower Hamlets, 2024).

In terms of risk factors, Tower Hamlets has an elevated level of deprivation, which has been associated with an increase in the frequency of mental diseases, including depression. As a result, Tower Hamlets has a higher prevalence of depression among its residents than other London boroughs due to high rates of unemployment, homelessness, inadequate housing, health inequities, and deprivation, all of which contribute to the development of depression (Home of Dissertations, 2024).

Stakeholders involved in the program

Councillors and the local council play a key role in helping people with mental illnesses by providing social services, education, housing, the environment, public health, and employment. Also, the families, neighbours, the NHS, community organisations, and other essential partners, including housing providers and law enforcement, are all involved. However, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is an essential institution that advocates for residents' opinions (Tower Hamlets, 2024). The principles of community development are fundamental to effective community engagement and social work practice and must be respected. People have a fundamental right to self-determination, and communities can make their own decisions and choices without interference from others. Furthermore, community empowerment involves people gaining control over their resources and actively using them to influence outcomes. Collective action is important because it enables people to form groups or organisations to amplify their voices and have a greater impact, thereby driving change more effectively. Sustainable development emphasises the importance of prioritising sustainability in community development initiatives, ensuring long-term benefits for all community members. Inclusivity is also essential because it must involve the participation of all community members. Finally, collaboration and sharing of experiences are critical to the success of community activities (Scottish Community Development Centre, 2024). Applying the principles is essential for mental health services to offer effective treatments. Firstly, there is the principle of equitable access, which states that every person has the right to receive quality healthcare that is tailored for people experiencing mental illness. Secondly, care should be person-centred to address the unique needs of each individual (RANZCP, 2021). Thirdly, the protection of personal data privacy is crucial, as it is a fundamental right that must be respected. Therefore, every person has the right to appropriate care that meets their specific needs.

Digital media and technologies

Digital technologies, platforms, and applications are essential for the effective delivery of mental health services. These solutions reach a broader population, including people in remote areas and underserved communities, significantly improving access to mental health support. Technology enables the customisation of interventions based on each patient's needs and preferences, resulting in more efficient and personalised care. Meanwhile, digital tools can collect and analyse substantial amounts of data, offering valuable insights into treatment outcomes, user behaviour, and mental health trends. By leveraging technology, we can identify mental health issues early, allowing for timely interventions and preventative measures before conditions worsen (NHS Confederation, 2023). Social media is also a support tool for adults dealing with mental health issues. It fosters a sense of community, allowing people to connect, share their stories, and provide essential support to one another. Additionally, by clicking on hashtags, people can quickly discover a wealth of resources and information on mental health topics simply by searching for relevant keywords.

Theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory asserts that human motivation is derived from five essential categories: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualisation. Thus, this theory suggests that when people improve in achieving these goals, they feel more satisfied and motivated. Therefore, this theory not only sheds light on personal motivation but also provides greater insight into human behaviour and well-being (Hopper, 2024). People who fail to meet the demands of various hierarchical levels may suffer from mental health problems. In addition, failure to meet their basic physiological needs can lead to serious illness or even death. Similarly, failure to address the various levels within the hierarchy can contribute to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder. Feelings of being unloved or not belonging to a group can also lead to anxiety and sadness. In addition, depression and anxiety can sometimes be due to low self-esteem or an inability to achieve personal fulfilment (GoodTherapy, 2015).

Legislation and policy impact the support and growth of a community

The Mental Health Act of 1938 outlines the rights of individuals with mental health issues concerning their assessment and treatment. While the Mental Capacity Act 2005 outlines the rights of those who are unable to make decisions for themselves. Also, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 mandates that the NHS provide care standards for individuals with mental health problems that are on par with those for individuals with physical health issues. Regarding policies, the 2019 NHS Long Term Plan emphasises the importance of mental health by proposing several significant changes, including improving access to care and increasing investment in mental health services. In contrast, the 2016 NHS Five Year Forward View for Mental Health focused on key priorities for the NHS, such as promoting healthy communities, encouraging prevention, and enhancing the quality of care (Working Together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Tower Hamlets residents, 2019).

Barriers are obstacles to accessing mental health services in Tower Hamlets

The language barrier presents significant challenges for people with mental illnesses seeking treatment, as many struggle to speak, read, and write in English. Other people are unsure how to ask for assistance and avoid discussing their conditions for fear of being exposed, exacerbating the complexity of their situation. Some people lack the digital skills to navigate online resources for mental health support and information, while others are unaware of how mental illness and disorders can impact their lives. People with low self-esteem, on the other hand, experience shame, fear, and hopelessness, which can lead to feelings of isolation, especially if they do not have friends or family to support them. Additionally, available mental health services are often insensitive to cultural differences and are not suited to a wide range of needs (Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, 2024).

Recommendations

Mental health resources should be specifically designed to meet the population's diverse needs while accounting for ethnic differences. Furthermore, awareness of mental illness should be raised through campaigns that promote community resilience. It is critical to provide high-quality services and prompt assistance during an emergency. The Department of Public Health should continue to develop strategic interventions to address mental health concerns. It should also ensure that pregnant women and new mothers receive comprehensive mental health care as well as develop programs specifically for older adults. All service programs should acknowledge that some people may have difficulty reading and writing in English. Furthermore, physical health should be improved through adequate sleep and regular exercise (Mental Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Tower Hamlets, 2013). Housing design should incorporate well-planned environments to foster healthy, liveable communities. Child-friendly gardens with play areas should also be built and streets made safer to reduce anti-social behaviour (Tower Hamlets, 2020).

Conclusion

Tower Hamlets has the highest adult depression and anxiety rate. Homelessness, legal problems, substance abuse, and physical disabilities are all risk factors for mental health issues. In addition, unemployment, discrimination, and economic hardship all contribute to these challenges. In response, the English government has enacted laws to assist people dealing with mental health issues. These include the Mental Health Act of 1983, the Mental Capacity Act of 2005, and the Health and Social Care Act of 2012. Along with these laws, several policies have been developed to support people suffering from mental illnesses. Adults suffering from mental illnesses can receive immediate and effective care from national health services. Other forms of support, such as social media and mobile devices, can help them communicate with family and friends. They also provide platforms for exchanging information about initiatives and treatments aimed at enhancing mental health and overall well-being. Also, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provides important insights into how a lack of basic needs can cause anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems. To meet fundamental needs such as food and shelter, individuals need to have a respectable job that provides adequate compensation. Additionally, feeling safe and secure in their homes, communities, and workplaces is crucial for overall well-being. One effective strategy would be to establish support systems that help individuals recover from setbacks in their lives.

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