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**ANNUAL REPORT  
2019/2020**



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# WELCOME

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I would like to begin my Chairs report by thanking my colleagues on the Tower Project management committee; they, like me, are totally focused to ensuring both the short and long term good governance and management of the Tower Project. I am sure my colleagues would agree that it was good to see Pamela Mason return to the committee after ill health.

Despite the challenging times we are all experiencing, it has been another positive year for the Tower Project, and it has been a year of achievement.

The Tower Project achieved recognition for their commitment to the staff, as they were awarded the Investor in People award once again. I feel sure that the Tower Project will continue to go from strength to strength, valuing the members, the staff, and of course our parents and carers.

I am delighted to report that the Tower Project supported living service is now registered with the Care Quality Commission. Our Supported Living Managers should be recognised, as they have faced some testing times over the past few months and have been working hard, looking after our residents and ensuring their safety and well-being.

None of our achievements would be possible without our teams of excellent staff and volunteers. Sue Burlo & the New Dawn Day Opportunities service, Belinda Foster and her team at the First Start Day Opportunities Service (Autism), Graham Smithers and the Job Enterprise & Training team, and our Children's & Youth Services Manager, Naima Boukhriss and the Youth Service Coordinator Samantha Johnstone. I would also express appreciation to our Finance & Administration teams who work quietly in the background.

This report would not be complete without my appreciative gratitude to our CEO Gerald O'Shaughnessy; the growth and stability of our organisation is hugely down to his dedication, commitment and ongoing hard work. By working together we have achieved impressive outcomes and have so much to be proud of, and I hope we can look to you all for your continued support and trust in the coming year.

**Dave Barnett**  
**Chair**  
**Tower Project**

"I feel sure that the Tower Project will continue to go from *strength* to strength, *valuing* the members, the staff, and of course our parents and carers."

# CHIEF EXECUTIVES ANNUAL REPORT

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Welcome to my annual report and as Chief Executive of the Tower Project I can report that although the later end of the year has been very challenging due to the Covid-19 pandemic the year as a whole has been both a constructive and successful year for the Tower Project. As in previous years I would like to begin my annual report with a recognition and thank you to all the staff, parents & carers, partners, members, volunteers and management committee members who have generously contributed so much of their time and energy into making the Tower Project a continued success and the enormous support they have given to both myself, and the whole of the Tower Project throughout the year.

The Tower Project has again faced a very challenging year in terms of the continued reduction in local and central government funding, but against this backdrop we have been able to further develop our existing core services and also create a number of new services. This has enabled the Tower Project to meet the ever increasing demand for our services for both new and existing members. We hope to continue in the coming year to build on the achievements of the previous year and further develop new and innovative projects and services to meet the increasing needs of our members and families.

An important element of the Tower Project is the New Dawn Day Opportunities Service which again has increased in size this year and is considered a very successful day opportunities service. The Whitehorse Road premises is the home of the New Dawn service and we continue to refurbish further areas of the premises with additional facilities being created for members. The extensive programme of arts and crafts that are provided in the service was moved to the John Scurr Centre but we have already outgrown the centre and we are currently looking a new premises to house the arts & crafts programme and develop a life skills service. It is hoped in the coming year more members of the service can access the life skills service for the day they may move into residential or supported living. The New Dawn service continues to work closely with our Job Enterprise & Training Team (JET) developing and creating work experience and training opportunities for members who wish to develop new skills and experiences; with a number of our members moving into supported employment in our social enterprises and community cafes.

The First Start Day Opportunities Service is a core service within the Tower Project and is the service that provides for our young people with Autism. The service has completed another successful year at the services dedicated building the Cedar Centre. The Cedar Centre was acquired by the Tower Project solely for the service and provides a specifically created environment for members and staff and is the permanent home of the service.



We have continued to improve on the quality and range of support the service is able to offer with further plans to expand next year into domiciliary care.

We have continued to develop and improve the Cedar Centre and have again invested significantly in both the fabric and facilities in the building for both staff and members. The service continues to provide a number of services outside the day opportunities service with outreach and centre support in the evenings and weekends, forming an important additional service for members and families. The First Start service has developed into a highly regarded service with the sector gaining full accreditation through the National Autistic Societies accreditation scheme which is the quality mark for the sector. A number of awards and recognition having been gained by the service with the service gaining a seat on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism and membership of Autism Europe.

Although we continue to work in a challenging economic environment, the Tower Project has continued to recruit new staff to services, many with disabilities, which has enhanced the skills of the staff team and created unique employment opportunities for new staff. The number of staff appointed within the Tower Project has once more increased this year with a significant number of those appointments being members of the local community which we hope will increase and grow over the next year and enable the Tower Project to offer more employment opportunities.

The JET service is the Tower Projects disability employment project and it continues to provide support and training to disabled job seekers with a committed and dedicated staff team who have this year successfully increased the funding of the service which will further develop the training and support element in partnership with local schools and colleges. This year the service has further extended their work into schools and colleges and developed a wider range of support and opportunities for school leavers, which has been an achievement the manager and his staff team are very proud of. The service is located at Candy Wharf in its own purpose built premises which provides a number of additional facilities to support the work of the staff team. This year the project has again increased the number of disabled job seekers directly into training and employment and has continued to develop a strong social enterprise element providing employment for young disabled people.

Last year the JET service opened a new community café “The Haggerston Perk” with plans to open more community cafes this year which will create new jobs for both local jobseekers and young disabled people seeking employment or further training. The service has continued to work and develop strong relationships and partnerships with companies and institutions and I would take this opportunity to again thank all of our supporters and funders for the continued support the Tower Project has received from them over the past five years which has enabled the project to open a number of social enterprise creating training and supported employment for the disabled community of East London.



The Tower Projects Children's Services has continued to provide a substantial and quality service following a challenging period with a number of changes to the service. The service has again been awarded an Outstanding status by OFSTED, which clearly demonstrates the high quality of our services which the staff and management team are very proud of. Having formal partnerships in place with schools and related voluntary sector organisations the service has continued to evolve and provide a larger and more diverse range of activities for children and young people in Tower Hamlets and the neighbouring boroughs. The after-school clubs and holiday schemes along with our youth and leisure services have funding for the foreseeable future which is enabling the service to focus on improvement. The service provides to children and young people with increasing complex needs and employs a significant number of local staff from the community working throughout the whole week and evenings with schemes and projects across all of the school holiday periods.

The work over the previous three years to provide training and staff development has continued which has ensured the retention of the Investors in People Award which we now hold along with the Two Ticks Award (Positive about Disability) and the Matrix Award for information and advice. All three awards are industry benchmarks in terms of quality assurance and give an indication of the ongoing investment in staff and volunteers the Tower Project makes each year which will support the organisation to develop our staff into service managers and active members of the community for the future.

This year additional improvements have been made to all of the Tower Project premises and following discussions with our membership a considerable amount of new facilities have been installed in all of the buildings. I would take this opportunity to thank all those individuals and organisations who have either donated or contributed financially to the Tower Project and would single out the Ratcliff Trust and the Church of England for the significant financial and practical support they have made over many years.

The Tower Project continues to support our members towards achieving greater independence and direct involvement within the community and the opportunity to take short breaks and holidays. The number of direct payments and individual budgets the Tower Project receives has again increased and with this in mind the organisation has continued with our Community Outreach & Support Service enabling members and families to take direct control of their individual budgets and services they receive to pay for support in the home and community.

The ongoing development and full registration with the Care Quality Commission of supported living services for our members has again been a high priority for this year and with the success of the supported living projects this has enabled the Tower Project to develop more projects offering members the opportunity to live independently with staff to support them in a home of their own in the local community.



The Tower Project will be shortly undertaking a new project in Westport Street for 3 young people following the successful project in Indigo Mews on the Isle of Dogs that will provide a supported living home for young men with autism in a fully refurbished property. We are currently working on our latest supported living house which will provide a permanent home for 3-4 young men. The partnership work with various Community Housing groups to provide supported living services for members is ongoing and we hope to create new projects which is an important part of the Tower Project member's futures.

An important new service for the Tower Project is the development of an Advice and Information service working across Tower Hamlets and Hackney which will have a domiciliary care service attached providing support for members and families in their own homes. The new service builds on the work that is already undertaken in all our services and will both advise and support members and families on a range of issues from benefits to housing with a strong focus on education and transition.

The Tower Projects Business Plan was completed and approved last year by our Board of Trustees and has set the organisations objectives for the next three years. The plan incorporated the impact of a number of new legislative changes that will impact on social care and also considered the effect of continued cuts to local authority funding which is the reality for the foreseeable future. The new and additional services the Tower Project wish to develop and provide will enhance and compliment the broad range of services the Tower Project already provides and will further support what we are able to offer the wider community in the coming years particularly in housing.

The achievements of the last year gives a strong basis for developing additional services in the coming year which can only be achieved by everyone that is involved with the Tower Project continuing to work together as an active community organisation. With the continued support of all the membership our plans for the future can be viewed with cautious optimism so that the already good reputation of the Tower Project can be further enhanced and services expanded to meet the ever growing needs of our membership and the wider community.

**Gerald O'Shaughnessy**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Tower Project**



# NEW DAWN DAY SERVICE

New Dawn creates opportunities for young people which enables them to have a more personal centered approach. Educational learning allows young people to choose specific areas of interest. The learning opportunities are not just provided in class rooms, but also within the community, visiting museums and other organisations and places of learning. This allows a more interactive, stimulating experience which aids learning.

The service supports young people to embrace various activities in their community, encouraging positive inclusion. New Dawn aims to foster the sense of community and friendship, providing safe, comfortable and enjoyable experience for those who attend. It offers a vital opportunity to meet with others and improve life choices. At New Dawn people are encouraged and empowered to live life to the full and reach their potential.



*opportunities*



*educational*



*wellbeing*



## Education and Learning

Along with providing in-house sessions at the Tower Project, we also work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Idea Stores and the University of East London – Rix Centre. As part of the Rix Centre Purple Star programme, service users have participated in events at the University of Reading and often attend University of East London to work on projects delivered by the Rix Centre. We also have live musical entertainment performed at the Tower Project which has enabled service users to learn about various musical instruments and music from around the world.

## Entertainment and Social Activities

The service users visit local cinemas, theatres, museums, and places of interest. They like to do their own personal shopping and have meals out. New Dawn have a group of people that are interested in local history and we have incorporated this as part social activity visiting various venues and points of interest in the borough.

## Sports & Fitness

Service users attend local fitness centres such as Mile End Leisure Centre, Whitechapel Sport Centre, Poplar Baths and the Urban Gym (with specialised equipment). This year, service users have made great progress in swimming!

## Life Skills

Several service users participated in “Let’s Work” programme organised by the JET Service which enabled them create their own CV’s and also participated in work taster sessions in the community.

## Health and Wellbeing

Service users have their personal physio programmes weekly and also participate in various health and wellbeing sessions designed to stimulate and strengthen muscle tone.

# FIRST START DAY SERVICE (AUTISM)

Tower Project First Start Day Opportunities Service (Autism) provides bespoke services specifically for people living with Autism. Based on the Isle of Dogs, the service was developed in April 2004 and has attained accreditation through The National Autistic Society. This means we have proven the following:

- Specialised knowledge and understanding of autism.
- Knowledge and understanding of autism that consistently informs the service, the resources and management of First Start.
- Knowledge and understanding of autism that consistently informs the assessment and supported planning of people who access the service.
- Knowledge and understanding of autism that consistently informs all aspects of our practice.

Tower Projects' First Start service have had another busy year of enjoyment, socialising and learning of new skills. The service has become a staple in the community providing life changing respite and continued support for families.

First Start, establish the way a person communicates whether this is verbal, or through visual support or any other communication techniques. They have trained support staff who specialise and are able to support service members. They use social stories and visual schedules with its service members to enhance areas of support e.g. skills of social understanding and communication to relieve anxieties and improve service members wellbeing. This also prepares service members for any upcoming events or to prepare for a change or transition e.g. visiting the Doctor/Dentist/Hospital or any other healthcare appointment.

Parents' and families this year have continued to express their gratitude for the First Start service, who have members that many other services and educational systems have been unable to support.

First Start use physical and visual equipment to enable service members to become as independent as possible and to be able to make their own choices regarding daily activities and how they are supported with an emphasis on what motivates them.

*"First Start have given me my life back!"*

- Parent



**90%**

**OF AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS HAVE ATYPICAL SENSORY EXPERIENCES**



**24**

**MEMBERS**



# JOB, ENTERPRISE AND TRAINING SERVICE (JET)

The Tower Project's award winning Job Enterprise and Training Service (JET) is East London's leading provider of specialist supported employment services for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism. Operating from a modern, accessible Employment and Training Hub, JET aims to increase the number of disabled people and people with long term health conditions that are in sustainable employment by providing a straight forward programme of support solutions, which will equip clients with the required tools to overcome any barriers stopping rapid progression into employment.



Organised UK's  
Largest Job Fair with

**300+**

young people and adults  
with learning disabilities  
attending

It's been another successful year for our JET service who continue to go above and beyond to ensure employment and opportunities for clients. They held the UK's largest ever Job Fair with over 40 organisations attending at the Ecology Pavilion in Mile End Park, including; Sainsbury's, The Body Shop, Met Police, Queen Mary University and West Ham Football Club.

Three JET students, being supported by our Job Coaches on work placements at the Yurt Café at the Royal Foundation of St Katherine's had the privilege of meeting HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, when she popped into the café for some tea and conversation. She spoke to the young people about their work placements and their aspirations for employment in the hospitality sector.

The JET service continues to single-handedly transform employment for adults and young people disabilities in long-term support services, with a higher rate of employment than a mainstream job centre, not only reaching annual targets but exceeding expectations each year.

JET worked with AEG to provide supported volunteering placements at Barclaycard British Summertime Festival in Hyde Park during six of their main show days on the Accessibility Hub. The brief was to support the Access Manager for a range of tasks pre-show, these included positioning over 600 chairs on both the Viewing Platform, Ground Level Viewing Area and the VIP Area.

JET made headlines during the pandemic for their excellent work in adapting remotely and continuing to engage and support clients through their 'hotel at home' programme which enabled young people to gain experience and good practice in the hospitality sector. Matrix Standard recently used JET's 'hotel at home' programme as an example of excellent practice and ability to adapt and continue to support clients.



# SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Tower Project run a number of social enterprises to provide real-life work and training opportunities for people with a learning disability, sensory disability, autism, physical disability or health related issue.

The transferable employability skills taught prepare individuals for the world of work and independent living, and include:

- Barista training from our partners Climpson & Sons
- Cash handling and card payments
- Food Safety Level 1
- Health & Safety in the Workplace Level 1
- Food preparation
- Customer service training
- Catering for events
- Shopping independently
- Team work/building
- Timekeeping

We currently run two cafe's, a coffee cart and a valeting service



SKILLS  
TRAINING  
EXPERIENCE  
SUCCESS

Our two cafe's, Haggerston Perk and Ocean View took their catering abilities and service to another level this year, preparing and serving food at various events in East London, for both Hackney Council and Tower Hamlets, providing fantastic customer service and event management experience.

The biggest event they catered for was for over 100 people at the Hackney Carers Awards. This was a large event, the staff were fantastic and they all received great feedback!

The social enterprises' continue to provide crucial training for JET clients which, with the assistance and care of our JET Job Coaches gives these individuals the tools to move quickly and efficiently into full-time paid job roles.



**"Everything was wonderful and inspiring, the team included young adults and teens who helped with the lunch. They were outstanding, professional and efficient"**

- Guest at Hackney Carers Awards



# CHILDREN'S SERVICE

The Tower Project provides various services to children and young people with complex physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties and Autism between the ages of 5 to 18 years. These services range from After School clubs, Saturday Autistic provision, Summer Schemes, Easter Schemes and October and February half term schemes. Through our services we endeavor to support young people develop their full potential through positive role models, social interaction, inclusion and new experiences that will broaden their horizons. We provide this through a stable, secure and relaxed environment where young people are appreciated at all times and parents and carers feel content to leave them.

It has been another busy year for our Children's Service who held their fun-filled holiday schemes, Saturday service and after-school club.

During Summer 2019 children enjoyed the hot weather visiting parks and being able to enjoy the lovely local walks. Indoors the activities included cooking, arts and crafts, games and music!

In August 2019, our 'Complex Needs Holiday Schemes' for 5-8 year old's was judged as Outstanding across the board by Ofsted, an excellent award for all the staff that worked so hard for this achievement. You can find the full Ofsted Report on our website.

**"Staff have an exceptional approach to working with children. They show a wealth of knowledge, particularly in supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to a highly stimulating and nurturing environment."**

- OFSTED 2019



*friendships*

# YOUTH & LEISURE SERVICE

The Tower Project's Youth Service provides an evening service for young people aged between 11-25 years old who live in the borough of Tower Hamlets. Our service runs term-time only. We provide a transport service for many of our young people so that they can attend. All our staff are skilled and trained accordingly, they have enhanced DBS checks and have ongoing training to support the young peoples needs. The Tower Project Youth Service provides a SEND community for young people, a specialised service that will develop them socially, emotionally and intellectually. Achieved through a variety of enjoyable and stimulating activities as well as transferable life skills. We aim to empower the young people by developing their self-esteem, confidence, independence, social interaction and overall well-being.

At the start of every quarter the service have a forum to ensure the activities on the timetable are a reflection of the young people's voices. This encourages the young people to exercise choice and to take ownership of the Youth Service.

This year consisted of various activities to develop pre-existing or the development of new skills such as social interaction, presentation and performance, confidence, decision-making, methods of communication, creativity, independence and improving self-esteem and obtaining a positive self-identity.

Activities included cooking, team building games, talent shows, exploring the local community and ICT. The young people also had informal, learning through play education on health, fitness, fire safety around the home. The Youth Service celebrate the young people's success at the end of each year through an organised awards evening to congratulate their achievements. In November 2019, The London Borough of Tower Hamlets hosted The Youth Achievement Awards, a ceremony to recognise the Borough's most inspiring youths which gave the service an opportunity to put forward our Youth Service member, Yaomin, which he won!

*"In Summer, I went to the Thames Barrier Park to explore the gardens. Spending time with my friends is great fun. I can just be me..."*

- YOAMIN



**INSPIRATIONAL!**



Yoamin, Young Achiever of the Year

# SUPPORTED LIVING

The Tower Project provides and manages a range of both supported living and independent living projects for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism. The projects and services range from self contained apartments which require minimal support through to shared accommodation that provide 24 hour intensive support to the individuals. Many of our residents will have moved into the accommodation directly from living with parents or carers with some moving directly from a residential school into adult services. The Tower Project provides additional family support services to ensure and support the transition into the individuals new home and will develop specific developed projects on request.



## Home Sweet Home...

The Supported Living service was developed following extensive consultation with parents and carers who were concerned about what would happen to their sons and daughters in the event that they were no longer able to care for them.

The young men and women living in Supported Accommodation attend Tower Project Day Services, where they engage in educational, therapeutic, informational and social activities.

During lockdown, day services suspended operations due to government guidance and this has meant some services have been delivered by Day Service staff in conjunction with house staff at the house. This was a testing time for our supported living clients but gave them an opportunity to further their bond together as housemates. They filled their time with lots of activities such as; walks around the local area including feeding ducks at the river and going to see some birds of prey, games and activities including football, barbecues, jigsaws, model making, yoga, arts and crafts, plus lots of cooking and baking!

Staff had to adapt their support during this time and provided support with shopping and medical appointments, working with the individuals on resource packs around housekeeping and personal hygiene, educational work around COVID-19 including hand washing, PPE wearing and social distancing procedures and maintaining family contact via phone and social media and then latterly risk assessed visits.



# FUTURE PLANS AND DEVELOPMENTS

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## **Autism Day Opportunities Service**

The Tower Projects Autism Day Opportunities Service (First Start) continues to grow and develop new opportunities for young people attending the service. The staff team have again been successful with accrediting the service through the National Autistic Societies accreditation scheme which demonstrates the quality of the service. We will continue to provide health support services for the members and look at new ways to work with the young people using existing alternative and complimentary therapies along with a more expansive arts and music programme. The service has its own dedicated premises (The Cedar Centre) and we will continue to develop and improve the building in the coming year building a larger kitchen and dining area.

## **Community Outreach Support Services Project**

(Information & Advice – Home Support Service)

The Tower Projects Community Outreach Support Service will provide information and advice to members on issues such as housing, benefits, and health, with support to access direct payments and individual budgets. The development of the service has been delayed this year but with additional consultation with families we will be expanding the service to include domiciliary care that will support people in their own homes. It is our intention to continue to fully develop the service by the end of this year and provide a service across both Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

## **Jobs Enterprise & Training (JET)**

Following another very successful year, the service is placing a much stronger emphasis on the training of young people who could be supported into employment with the service recruiting a number of new staff to meet the ever growing need. The services premises (Candy Wharf) has continued to be fully used and is providing partnership training with both corporate and statutory partners. The service continues to provide facilities to job seekers with disabilities and people who want to access training and support via the service. A number of specialist staff have further developed partnerships with businesses, neighbouring boroughs, schools and colleges, which has expanded the services. We are planning to further grow the service in the coming year which will need to be considered against an ongoing environment of restrictive funding for employment and training services both locally and nationally.

## **Day Opportunities Service (New Dawn)**

The New Dawn Service has developed a successful supported work placement element for members attending who have expressed an interest in accessing either paid employment or supported work placements. From placing young people for a few hours a week in

supported jobs the service has become very popular and we have now widened the service to support young disabled people in supported work experience placements through our network of partners and supporters as well as our community services and cafes with a strong focus on developing independent living skills for members.

### **Social Enterprise**

From the development of our first successful social enterprise the Tower Hamlets Valeting Service and the development of the Ocean View Café with its mobile coffee shop and the Haggerston Perk community cafe the various enterprises have continued to provide supported employment and training for young disabled people working and volunteering in the projects. The design and fashion social enterprise that was developed last year has now gone on to become fully independent and it is our intention to open additional community cafes this year creating new employment opportunities.

### **Whitehorse Road Premises**

This year we have continued to improve the building to create better use of the limited space available, we have continued to move staff into improved office space and provided additional washrooms for both staff and members. The building has again been redecorated and we will continue to both modernise and refurbish as both the finance and opportunities allow. We have continued the process of repairing and maintaining the exterior of the main building which is a listed building and we are planning to create improved access to the building.

### **Supported Living**

Following our registration with the Care Quality Commission we have been able to acquire another property in Westport Street which will provide a supported living home for 3 young people, this follows on from the development of a supported living scheme at Indigo Mews for 3-4 young people. We are planning to develop two additional supported living projects in the coming year which will provide a home for 5 young people. The Tower Project will acquire properties where possible which will provide supported living for members who are currently living at home with parents or carers. As previously reported the Tower Project has entered into partnerships with a number of Community Housing organisations.

### **Organisational Development**

The Tower Project had outgrown our use of the John Scurr Centre and we are currently looking at acquiring a community centre that would enable the Tower Project to develop a number of additional elements to our day opportunities services creating new activities for members. We are actively looking for a larger premises in the locality which will allow us to further expand and develop the wide range of activities and skills training that we already provide and also enable the Tower project to have a life skills service.

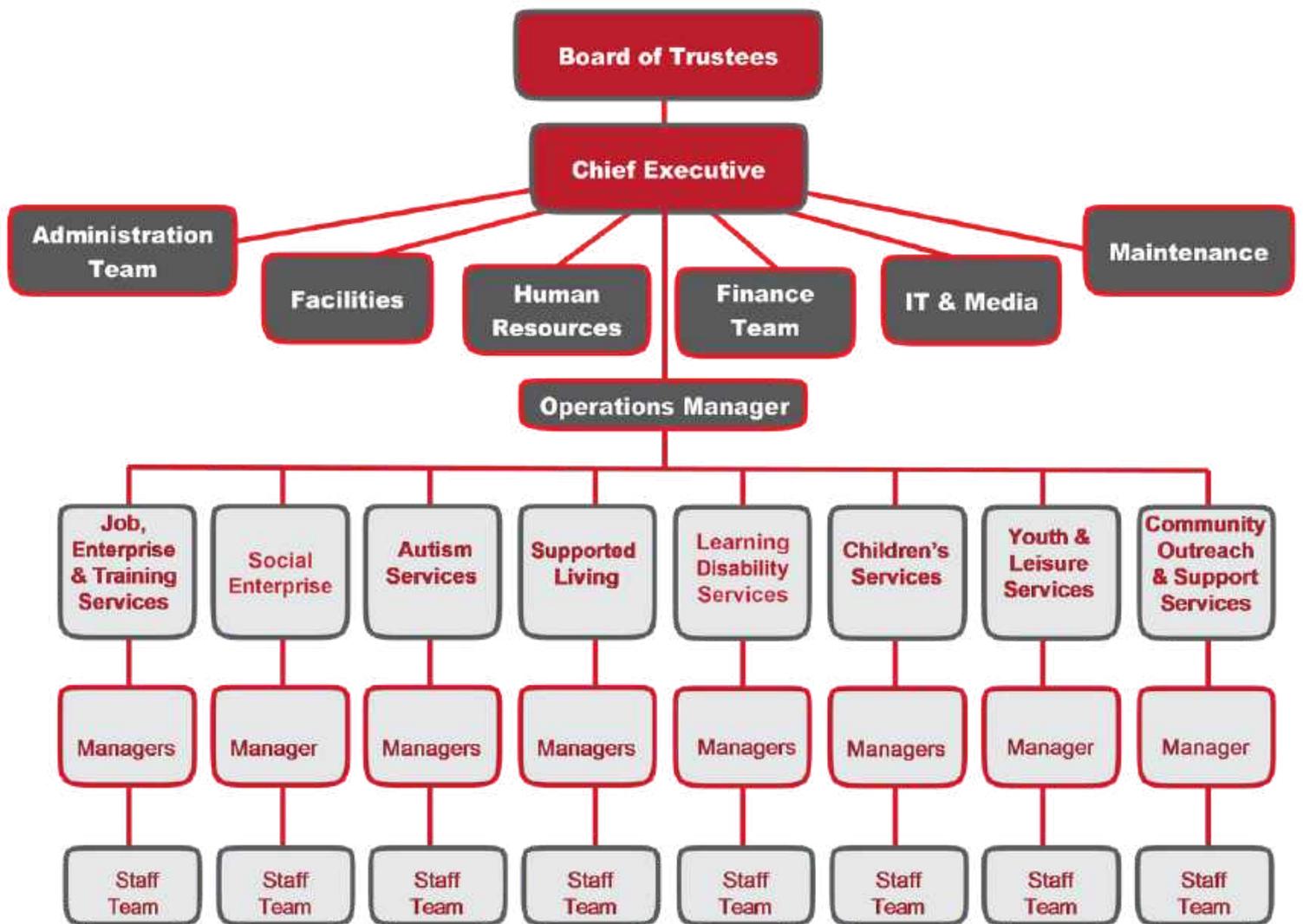
# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE 2020



The above diagram displays the organisational governance structure of the Tower Project. The management committee has a full membership which is made up of one representative from each of the forums, the additional members of the management committee are elected at the Tower Projects Annual General Meeting and are drawn from the membership of the Tower Project. The elected members are elected to offices within the Tower Project and hold the office for one year. In addition the management committee may co-opt members either to the main management committee of the various forums or sub committees who have expertise in specific disciplines.



# STAFF AND SERVICES STRUCTURE 2020







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