



ALL HALLOWS BOW

Fern Street
Family Centre



ABOUT US

ALL HALLOWS BOW

Dear Applicant,

I am delighted you are interested in the role of Centre Manager (maternity cover) at All Hallows Bow's Fern Street Family Centre. My prayer is that this job pack helps to give you a clearer sense of who we are as both a charity and a church and whether God might be calling you to join us as work to see lives transformed here in East London, through the ministry of Fern Street Family Centre.

All Hallows Bow church has had a presence in the Devons Road neighbourhood for many years. After facing closure in 2010, the remaining members courageously invited myself and my wife Rev Beki Rogers, to work with them to save the church, and 14 years later, the All Hallows Bow family has grown to be a vibrant congregation of around 120 people with many, if not most of us, living in walking distance of the church. We have also supported the planting of 2 new churches into nearby parts of East London.

Our congregation reflects our urban community's diversity: We are a mixture of longer-term residents often on lower incomes, young families, professionals in their twenties and thirties, and others who have felt specifically called to join God's mission here in East London. Some of us are new to faith in Jesus, others of us have been walking with God for many years. Together we are God's family in Bow, seeking to make Jesus known in our local community and see lives transformed as we follow the way of Jesus. Our patterns of worship and spirituality draw on the evangelical and charismatic streams of the Anglican church and we are passionate about expressing the good news of Christ in ways that address the practical and felt needs and priorities of people in our local community, particularly those who are struggling, on the edge, or feel church just couldn't be for them.

We express this passion through our local outreach ministries including: AHABA community Café, homeless outreach, our Father's House ministry (for recovering addicts) and Fern Street Family Centre.

We hope that as you read through this pack you will be inspired and encouraged, as you consider whether joining our inspiring team and wonderful community here in Bow could be right for you.

We look forward to receiving your application!

Rev Cris Rogers

WE ARE
HERE TO BE...

"...an explosion of joy
by making Jesus known
in our local community
to see lives transformed."



FERN STREET FAMILY CENTRE

Fern Street Family Centre is a community project of All Hallows Bow church. Inspired by Jesus' promise in John 10:10 our vision is to see families in Bow living life to the full. Together, we want to work with our local community to see lives and life chances for children and their families change for the better.

Our story began in 2014 when the church was approached by Fern Street Settlement charity who were looking to partner with a local organisation who could work with them to address neighbourhood poverty and put their community centre to fresh use. What began with a dilapidated building and some pipe dreams, has since grown year-on-year in impact and reach, and today we offer holistic programme of advice, support, play, learning and community building 5 days a week that benefits more than 500 disadvantaged parents, carers and children every year.

Many of the families we work with are hugely resourceful, but affected by multi-dimensional poverty and disadvantage: low incomes, isolation, domestic abuse, overcrowding, poor mental health, debt and homelessness. Our work is an evolving response to the challenges disadvantaged children and families around us face. We offer safe and stimulating spaces for children to play and learn and for parents to strengthen their relationship with their children, a mix of group and one-to-one support for parents and carers, an English language programme for migrant parents, a food pantry, exciting out-of-school and holiday opportunities for school-aged children and the list continues to grow! Alongside it all we aim to bring families in our community together, breaking isolation and building a more connected Bow.

In all we do we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and hold onto his promise of hope, wholeness, restored relationships, justice and realised potential for children and families in our local area.

"I HAVE COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL."

JOHN 10:10



OUR HISTORY

Founded by social pioneer Clara Grant, Fern Street Settlement has been working for the well-being of families in the East End of London since 1907.

As headmistress of Devons Road Infant School (now Clara Grant Primary School), Clara was motivated by her Christian faith to address the poverty and deprivation that blighted the lives of her young pupils, and purchased several terraced houses in Fern Street, a few doors away from her school, to use as a hub for a wide variety of projects to improve the welfare of her students and their families.

One of her best loved initiatives was the Farthing Bundle ceremony, a weekly distribution of small packages of toys and knick-knacks for a nominal fee of just one farthing. The weekly ceremony (going strong as late as 1984) gave rise to Clara's well-known nick-name: 'The Bundle Woman of Bow.'

Clara Grant, was also a church warden at All Hallows Bow church for many years and established a lasting relationship between the Settlement and the church. In 2014, All Hallows officially partnered with Fern Street Settlement again to reopen the centre as a space to meet the needs of local children and families. Clara Grant died in 1949 but her vision and purpose, as well as her faith, endures in Fern Street Family Centre's work today.

OUR AIMS



STRENGTHEN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Through intensive one-to-one work with vulnerable families, group parenting courses, issue-based workshops, and early years activities, we support parents to develop attuned parenting style, practice positive behaviour management and recognise the impact of trauma leading to better emotional health for parents and children and stronger family relationships, particularly between parents and children.

SUPPORT CHILDREN TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

We help children develop strong social and communication skills and improve school readiness through our learning and play activities for young children, while also working with parents to equip them to play a full part in supporting their children's early development. Meanwhile our out-of-school activities support older children through offering a supportive environment to make friends and develop new skills and enriching experiences.

We want to help families face the future with confidence, and so we work with parents and carers to develop their basic skills such as English and IT, offer social activities and wellbeing support groups to strengthen their support network and improve mental and emotional health, and are constantly referring and signposting families into other relevant support and services. We also run a weekly membership-based food pantry for a small number of families on the lowest incomes

BUILD FAMILY RESILIENCE

EMPOWER FAMILIES TO TRANSFORM THEIR COMMUNITY

We want to actively involve parents, children and young people in shaping our work. We train and mentor parents as volunteers, build community through co-produced events such as our Lincoln Light Parade and Big Lunch, and aim to work with families to capture their views and develop shared solutions to local issues affecting children and families. This is an area of our work we hope to strengthen in the future.

PROMOTE EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

TEAM FERN STREET

The Fern Street Family Centre team is small but mighty! Currently the team is made up of 5 paid staff (3 part-time, 2 full-time), around 15 regular volunteers and many more ad-hoc volunteers.

Most of the team live locally to the centre, some are also members of All Hallows Bow church, others are local parents or former participants in the project.

The Centre Manager is supported by an engaged steering group which provides closer oversight of the centre's activities and strategic direction and offers key expertise in areas including child protection, finance and business development, as well acting as a sub-group and key connection point of the PCC (our church/charity's trustees).



We bring to our work a passion for local mission, a commitment to working together to see disadvantaged children and families thrive, a relational style of working with families, a belief in the value of local knowledge (most of us live locally and some of us have lived in the area many years or even our whole lives) and a rich variety of life experiences which help us relate to local children and families.

We see the involvement of members of All Hallows Bow church congregation at Fern Street, and the involvement of Fern Street staff members within the church wherever possible as key to keeping the project rooted in the life, ministry and mission of the church and maintaining our distinctive Christian ethos and vision.

OUR IMPACT

IN 2023 WE...



Engaged 230 children aged 0-4 and their parents/carers in in-person or remote early learning and play



Supported 90 parents to improve their mental health and reduce isolation through group wellbeing activities including exercise, creative arts and keys to wellbeing group



Helped 88 migrant parents improve English and literacy skills through our community ESOL programme



Provided 118 hours of one-to-one phone and in-person advice and support to help 19 vulnerable families move towards a more positive future



Supported 69 children aged 6-11 during the holidays at our fun and free holiday clubs



Engaged 35 children aged 4-11 in after school play activities to support their social, mental and physical health development.



Supported 28 families living in food poverty with essential food, toiletries and nappies through our weekly food pantry

You caring about me taught me that I'm actually careable about. I saw myself as a really low person and not as important as anyone else. Now I see that I'm valuable and that I'm worth caring about.



I was lonely, bored and my English was bad. Now I am more confident speaking English and better able to support my son. I love coming here... it feels like family!

"Groups like this are really important for families like me, single parent families where money is tight. They let our children have opportunities like other children to learn and have fun."



A CASE STUDY:

Terry and family

Selena and Noah (*not their real names) aged 7 and 4 joined one of our after-school club in 2019, having recently moved over from Africa to live with their dad, Terry. As the weeks went on, we noticed that Terry seemed to be struggling with his new life as a single dad - he often seemed stressed and anxious, and would frequently be harsh and critical with the children at pick-ups.

Over the next few months we focused on building rapport with Terry and in early 2020 he agreed to meet with our family support lead. He told her he had problems with debt, pain and anxiety and that sometimes he took out his stress on the children, using shouting as his main discipline method which he felt guilty about. We referred him for debt advice and secured a grant for some osteopathy which seemed to help. However when lockdown hit, Terry's mental health was badly affected and his increasing anxiety led to angry outbursts, often directed at the children.

Worried about the children and the tense atmosphere at home, we kept in contact twice a week with the family via videocall, and saw them all weekly when they picked up food and playpacks. We began offering a weekly respite play session to give everyone a break and in the end, got Terry's permission to work with the children's school to allow Selena and Noah to attend part-time again.

Meanwhile our family support lead had helped Terry make the connection between his parenting and mental health. He accessed a mental health support and enthusiastically participated in our Nurturing parenting programme when this started in Sept 2021. Terry is now growing into the dad he wants to be and has seen big changes in his parenting skills, confidence and support network

"Before, I was getting sleepless nights worrying about the knock on the door from the bailiffs, scaring the kids and all that. I feel much better about that now. Now I want to work on having more warm moments with my kids, doing less shouting and getting my anxiety levels down. I've realised that if criticism makes me feel crushed and angry, then my children probably feel the same. I want to focus on using more praise, lifting them up instead of starting on at them about all the things they're doing wrong.

The children have started to play with me more, our routines are better, and we've got a lot of laughter in us now. Even Selena, she's starting to relax now, whereas before she was quite uptight. I'm keeping calm with situations whereas before I would shout it out.

The way you have treated me and my children, the positive way you treat people of all colours, races and kinds of backgrounds, they're the things that keep me going. They show me there are people who care and that gives me hope."



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OUR CHALLENGES

CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty in Tower Hamlets is 'nothing short of an emergency' (London Borough of Tower Hamlets: Poverty Review 2021). In a typical classroom 17 out of 30 children [57%] in our ward live below the poverty line and our borough has the highest rate of child poverty in the UK, with our local ward being the 10th most deprived for children in the UK (Child Poverty Action 2021). This has a huge impact on children's lives and life chances.

HOUSING PRESSURES AND RISING LIVING COSTS

Spiralling rents and lack of affordable housing put huge pressure on families. Many are in rent arrears, severely overcrowded or in poor quality housing. Low paid and insecure work as well as welfare reforms such as the benefit cap and 2 child limit, leave many, especially single parents and large families struggling.

1 in 4 residents in Tower Hamlets are aged aged between 0-19 and this is even higher in our local neighbourhood. Tower Hamlets is the fastest growing local authority in the country.

YOUNG & GROWING

DIVERSITY & COHESION

Tower Hamlets is a borough of great diversity, where for hundreds of years, people have come in search of a better life. This diversity brings many strengths but it also leads to challenges in terms of building a connected community with positive relationships across ethnic, language, religious and social differences. Hamlets experiences huge inequality and the divide between those who on the highest and lowest incomes is huge, and gentrification is increasingly pricing families out of the borough. At the last census, 69% in our local ward were BAME, of which 44% had Bangladeshi heritage and nearly 50% identified as Muslim. Currently 90% of children in Tower Hamlets belong to an ethnic background other than White British and 73.5% of pupils have English as an additional language.

LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

There has been huge investment in education in Tower Hamlets over the last 10 years which has helped to mitigate the impacts of poverty on children and achievement is above average at secondary level, although below average at Key Stage 1 and 2. However children still start school with a much lower level of language and communication skills than average.

Good parental mental health especially during children's early years is critical to children's emotional wellbeing. Isolation, poverty and domestic violence and abuse has devastating consequences on parent and child mental health. Children from low-income families are much more likely to experience mental health problems and 1 in 10 children in the borough age 5-16 have a mental health disorder

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Over 1 in 4 children in Tower Hamlets are obese by age 11 and over 10% by age 5. Some of the reasons for this include low incomes which limits access to healthy food as well as overcrowding and lack of safe spaces for outdoor and active play. .

London Borough of Tower Hamlets



WHERE WE ARE



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**FERN
STREET**
family centre
www.fernstreet.org.uk