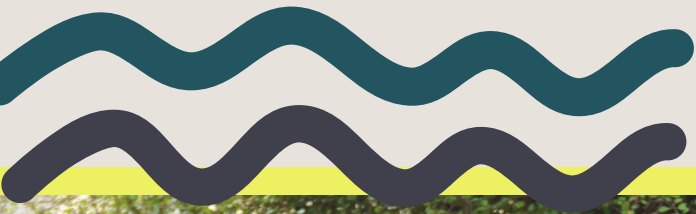


WELCOME TO LAMBETH

A guide for individuals
seeking asylum



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With special thanks to the Surrey County Cricket Club for hosting us at the Ben Hollioake Learning Centre (KIA Oval).

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WELCOME TO THE LAMBETH REFUGEE SUPPORT GUIDE

This guide was created by people who know first-hand what it means to wait – to wait for answers, for security, and for a chance to build a new life. Written by migrants from many different paths of life, each contributor brings their own personal experience of seeking asylum and navigating life in Lambeth while waiting for their refugee status.

Our goal is simple, to share the kind of information we wish we had when we arrived. Inside, you'll find practical advice, trusted resources, and personal tips – all gathered from our own journeys. From finding food banks to registering with a GP, understanding your rights to taking care of your mental health, this guide is made to be a tool you can rely on.

No-one should face this process alone. We hope that what we've learned can help make your path a little clearer, and remind you that even in the waiting, you are not alone.



WELCOME TO LAMBETH



COMMUNITY

Key information

- You can find **local charities and support centres** to help with housing, health, learning, and social activities.
- There are many **community centres, clubs, and places of worship** where you can meet people and feel welcomed.
- **Libraries** offer more than books – they provide free **Wi-Fi, computers, printing, and self-help guides**.
- You can join **Facebook groups**, the **Nextdoor app** or **local WhatsApp groups** to connect with people in your area.
- Some centres offer **free SIM cards** and basic phones to help you stay connected.
- If you have children aged 0-5 years old, you can join **children's centres** for free activities and to make friends.
- There are many **food banks** and hot food providers that can help with free food parcels, meals and affordable food.



Our tips and advice



Be open to meeting others – community centres are a great starting point.

It's okay to take your time – some people are talkative, others prefer quiet. Be mindful and go at your own pace.



You don't have to spend money to build friendships – start with shared interests.

Attend events or drop-in sessions regularly – being consistent helps build connections.



Use libraries not only for books but also as quiet, safe spaces to learn and reflect.

Meeting with your community helps preserve your culture and share it with others.



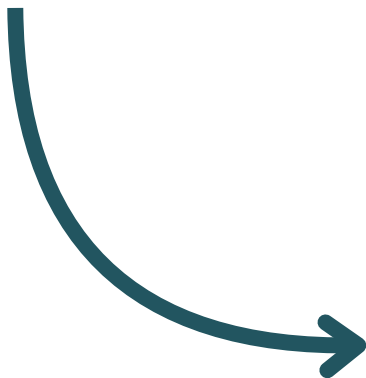
Lambeth and London have many exciting things to do and places to explore for free!



Helpful services and places

- **Lambeth Libraries** – Look for your local library.
- **Lambeth Directory of support** – This little guide is full of resources, including details of food banks and support.
- **Lambeth Children's Centres** – You can check out the full offer for children 0-5 years old.
- **Family Information Directory** – You can find local activities, organisations and services for children and young people.

Hear about how we got involved in our community



**GETTING
INVOLVED IN
COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES**





EDUCATION & LEARNING

Key information

- If you are aged **19+** you can access adult learning courses including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), maths, English, computer skills and much more.
- Local providers also have loads of courses available in **creative arts, wellbeing** and **fitness**.
- Studying is a great way to meet new friends and to explore careers and volunteering pathways.
- **After 6 months of asylum**, you are eligible to apply for adult learning, but check with your local provider if there are courses available for you before then!
- For **children aged 5-18**, education is always free and the local council can help you enrol them in school.
- Some providers offer **ESOL courses with creche** at children's centres if you have children under 5 years old (e.g. High Trees).
- There is no age limit to join an adult learning course, you can learn new skills and make new friends at any age.

Local education providers for adults

- **High Trees Community Development Trust**
- **City College Stratford**
- **The Baytree Centre** (women and girls only)
- **IRMO** (Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation)
- **MI Skills Development Centre**
- **Morley College**
- **Ripe Learning**
- **Train 2 Work Academy**
- **198 Contemporary Arts and Learning** and **Photofusion**
- **Learning Unlimited**

**LEARNING
IN LAMBETH**



**Hear about our
experiences learning
in Lambeth**



Our tips and advice



Seek a careers advisor to guide you on the qualifications needed for a new career.

Make sure the course you choose is right for you and your future goals, local providers will help you with this!



“Education is powerful – it can change your world.”

Refugees may receive financial assistance for Further Education.



Find mentoring and private tutors to support your children’s learning.



There are YouTube channels to help you learn English ([BBC videos](#)).

“Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”

Get your children enrolled in school as soon as possible.



Use online, face-to-face, and training courses to boost your skills and potential.



There are so many free courses to support your education!

Case study

My middle daughter arrived in the UK at age 14 and a half. She was placed into Year 10 at the end of the academic year, meaning her first full school year was Year 11.

As English is her second language, she was placed at a lower foundation level and she has found it difficult to adjust without additional support with her English. She is still finding her feet in the new school system as she prepares to sit her GCSEs.



Advice

The education system is very different in the UK, and understanding it is important to make the best decisions.

I wish I had spoken to someone for advice on the best education options for her age and found out what support was available for young people from ESOL background.

British education is among the best in the world. Get advice and let experts guide you to make the best decision for your children.



Useful websites

Lambeth schools – with a list of primary and secondary schools and admissions information.

Lambeth school term and holiday dates – to plan ahead for when your children are off.

Baytree 'Into School' programme – for girls & young women.

Guide to the UK education system

UK school year and term times

The school year runs from September to July.

It's divided into three terms:

- Autumn term: September – December
- Spring term: January – March/April
- Summer term: April – July

Holidays happen during Christmas, Easter, and Summer. You can always check school calendars on Lambeth's website.

If you arrive in the UK in the summer term (April – July)

Your children may be offered ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages) during the summer. This helps children and young people to build confidence and learn basic English, so they can start school fresh in September, with better language skills and support.

Support available



Free school meals



Uniform help in some areas



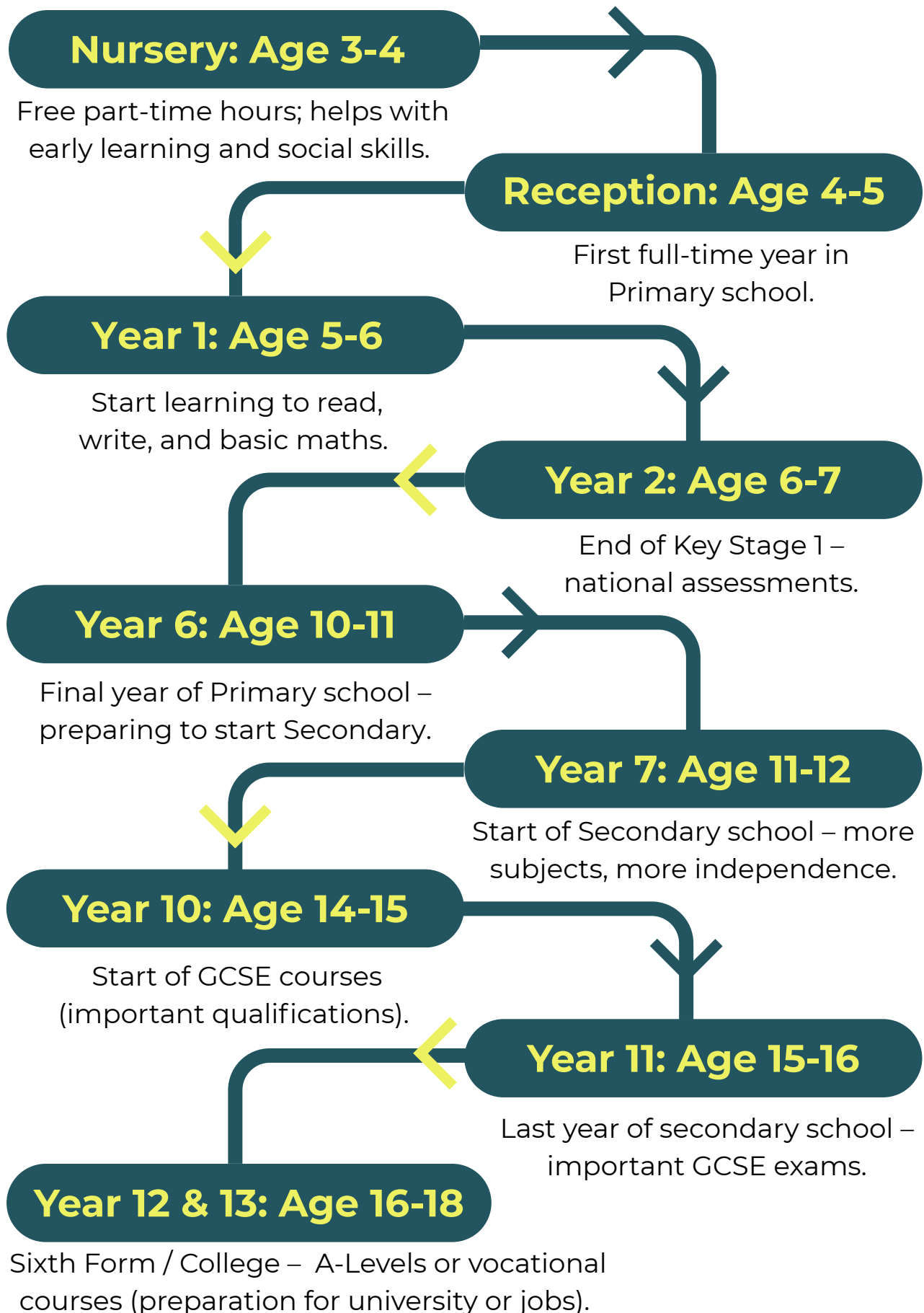
Interpreters or bilingual support in some schools



Emotional and learning support

For help with applying to a school or getting support, contact your local council or a refugee support organisation in your area.

Key school years & ages





HEALTH & WELLBEING

Key information

- You can register with a **GP (General Practitioner, which is a Doctor)** even if you don't have a passport or proof of address – **this is your right**.
- Some GPs allow **online registration** – charities and support centres can help you find one in your area.
- **Free therapy** is available through the **NHS** and organisations such as **Refugee Council** – ask your GP, school or support worker.
- **GPs and hospitals will text you** about appointments – read your messages carefully.
- **Arrive early** to medical appointments – time matters.
- It's okay to **ask for help** – for your body and your mind.
- Wellbeing includes more than healthcare – **creative and social activities** are part of staying healthy too.



Our tips and advice



Don't delay – register with a GP as soon as possible.

Ask your support worker if you need help with health forms.



"If you have dreams, if you have hope, then you will have rights and be bright."

Practical suggestions to stay healthy!



- Many hobbies are **free or low cost**, such as walking.
- Drink water, get fresh air, and **take care of your emotional health**.
- Try grounding activities like **mindfulness, prayer, or journalling**.
- Stay connected – **talk to at least one person each week**, even a family member abroad.
- Join **dance clubs, cooking groups, or supper clubs** to feel part of something.
- Go to **free museums, landmarks, or outdoor gyms in parks** – moving your body can boost your mood.
- Listen to **peaceful music** or **nature sounds** to calm your mind.
- Express yourself: **write, draw, crochet, knit, cook, or create**.



Case study – Healthcare

The NHS has been excellent in supporting my younger daughter and my wife.

There was an incident where my wife was using a blender and severely cut her finger. I called emergency services, and they arrived within five minutes. They administered first aid on the scene and took her to a local hospital where she was made to feel comfortable. She was then referred to a specialist hospital for plastic surgery. The care team were welcoming and professional throughout.

Thankfully, she made a full recovery!



Case study – Dental & Orthodontic care

My daughter arrived in the UK with braces and just one month of treatment left. After registering with a GP, we were referred to a dental surgery, where they explained what treatments are available under NHS, which are the different bands of contributions and when private treatment is needed.

Advice

Make sure you know what is covered by the NHS and explore options for financial help to afford treatments that are not covered.

Helpful services and places

- **NHS GP Services** – to register at your local practice.
- **NHS Dentist services** – to find a dentist that accept NHS patients and to check what is covered.
- **Refugee Council** – offering free 12 week individual and family therapy sessions, for adults and children, with refugee status. Interpreters are available.
- **Lambeth Talking Therapies** – free mental health support sessions in person or online.
- **Mind** – mental health support charity.
- **Libraries** – for free activities.
- **Parks** – for free activities and safe spaces (including outdoor gym).
- **Online guided mindfulness** (e.g. YouTube).
- **Mosaic Clubhouse** – for people 16 to 65 who suffer from an enduring mental illness.



HOUSING

Key information

- There are different types of accommodation in the UK: **temporary, emergency, permanent, local council housing, or private rentals.**
- You can ask your local council's housing department for help if you are homeless and they will give you advice and assistance. Depending on your personal situation, they may have to provide accommodation for you.
- If you are offered accommodation through the council, accept it immediately – there is always a “**one offer policy.**”
- If you refuse an offer, **you may lose your right to housing support** and could become homeless.
- If your current housing is **unsafe or unsuitable** (e.g. health hazard), **you can report it** – you have the right to request repairs.
- **Priority cases** (e.g. families, medical needs or disabilities) are likely to receive housing support more quickly.
- Always **seek advice** from a support worker or legal advisor before completing a **housing or homelessness application.**

Our tips and advice

"Apply for housing straight away – don't wait!"



"It's harder when you're alone – ask for support."



"There are roadblocks to getting housing – be patient and persistent."

"Get an appointment with the council as soon as possible."



"The waiting list can be long, but don't give up."

"When speaking to the council, write down the name of the person you spoke with."



"If you have any health conditions, bring an NHS letter to support your case."



"There is a priority list – know your rights and get help to understand where you stand."

REMEMBER!

NEVER GIVE UP. YOUR ASPIRATIONS ARE ALWAYS WITHIN REACH.



Helpful services and places

- **Local Council Housing Department** (e.g. Lambeth Housing Advice Team)
- **Shelter** – housing advice and support.
- **Citizens Advice** – help with forms and rights.
- **StreetLink** – for emergency support if homeless.
- **Southwark Law Centre / Lambeth Law Centre** – legal support for housing cases.
- **Refugee Council** – housing advocacy.





LEGAL ADVICE & RIGHTS

Key information

- You can access **free legal advice** through charities and legal aid services – ask your support centre for trusted referrals.
- It's important to **understand your rights** during the asylum process and what each stage means.
- If you receive a **letter from the Home Office**, always ask someone to help explain it – never ignore it.



- If you experience **discrimination or poor treatment**, there are organisations that can help you report it and get support. **The Equality Act 2010** legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society in UK.
- Make sure you get the **correct advice about your immigration status**, including your **rights to healthcare, education, and housing**.
- Know where to **find your local MP's office** and how to contact **urgent services** in emergencies.
- **Stay up to date** – immigration rules and entitlements can change over time.

Helpful services and places

- **Refugee Council**
- **Care4Calais**
- **Law Centres Network**
- **Citizens Advice**
- **Southwark Law Centre**
- **Asylum Aid**
- **Coram Children's Legal Centre** (families & children)
- **Right to Remain** – resources on understanding the asylum system.
- **Your local MP's surgery** – can assist with advocacy.

Our tips and advice



“Don't lose hope.”

“Keep an open mind – not every answer comes right away.”

“Take care of yourself – legal processes can be stressful, so look after your wellbeing too.”

“There are charities that help you with applications.”



“Stay informed. Things change – ask your advisor for updates.”



“Know the urgent services in your area and how to contact your local MP.”



NAVIGATING DAILY LIFE

Key information

- You can apply for benefits such as **Universal Credit** – ask for help at the Job Centre or a support centre.
- After arriving, you can access **free/discounted travel options** such as an **Oyster card** through the Job Centre.
- Local services in Lambeth include **libraries, food banks, clothing banks, community kitchens, and Lambeth Larder.**

“At first, I didn’t know where to find help. A support worker told me about Lambeth Larder. That’s how I found the food bank and got my first Oyster card.”

- You may be eligible for **free SIM cards, data plans, or laptops** through local charities.
- **Libraries** offer Wi-Fi, printing, book borrowing, and sometimes ESOL or skills courses – register with one near you.



- Visit **charity shops** for affordable clothes and household items.
- You can apply for an **E-Visa, a bank account, and other services early on.**

Our tips and advice



Mental & emotional health

- Keep a simple daily routine – even a morning stretch helps.
- To reduce mental overload turn off unnecessary notifications.
- Practise self-talk that is kind and encouraging.
- Take mental breaks: no screen, no pressure, just breathe.
- Don't be afraid to seek therapy or talk to someone you trust.



Time management

- Use tools like Google Calendar, a to-do list, or a planner.
- Plan your day the night before, including travel and breaks.
- Try time blocking – separate time for tasks, errands, and rest.
- Batch tasks to save time.
- Remember: “Done is better than perfect but unfinished.”



Home & environment

- Do a 15-minute tidy-up each day.
- Declutter – keep only what you love or use.
- Create small zones for work, rest, and play (even within one room).
- Take time just for you – it helps recharge your energy.



Physical health

- Drink water – carry a bottle; refills are available in public spaces.
- Eat a balanced meal – try to include a mix of colours.
- Walking and stretching are free – move when you can.
- Try to build a sleep routine with calming habits.



Relationships and social life

- Check in with 1-2 people a week to stay connected.
- Set boundaries – it's okay to say no.
- Be fully present – put away your phone when someone's talking.
- Express kindness: say thank you, give compliments.
- Handle conflict calmly: use “I feel” statements, aim to solve not blame.



Finances

- Track your spending with a free budget tool (e.g. YNAB, Mint).
- “Pay yourself first” – try to save a little before spending.
- Build an emergency fund over time.
- Learn the basics of interest, savings, and budgeting.
- Avoid debt traps – seek help from charities offering debt advice.



Personal growth

- Read for 10 minutes a day – choose inspiring or educational books.
- Reflect with a weekly or monthly journal.
- Set goals – break them into small, clear action steps.
- Learn new skills through courses or podcasts.
- Step outside your comfort zone regularly – try something new.

**“DON’T
GIVE UP!”**

Our words of motivation



**Listen to some words
of motivation from
others who have been
on this journey.**





VOLUNTEERING & EMPLOYMENT

Key information

- You can **volunteer** while seeking asylum – it's a great way to gain experience and meet people.
- After **12 months of asylum**, you can apply for permission to work in the UK.
- The **Job Centre** provides: employment advisors, free training, interview preparation, and CV writing support.
- You can find **volunteering roles** through local community centres and online platforms.

Helpful services and places

- **Job Centre Plus** – employment advice, training, CV help.
- **Local community centres** (e.g. High Trees, Baytree Centre, IRMO, etc.)
- **Doit.life, Reach Volunteering, Team Lambeth** or **Simply Volunteer London** for volunteering roles.

Our tips and advice

Learn English first – speaking English will help you access more opportunities.



Take action – be proactive in looking for work or volunteering.



Get involved in the community – it helps you grow your network and feel connected.

UK work experience is important – start with volunteering if you can.



Volunteering

UK references are often required – volunteering can help you get them.

Search for local volunteering opportunities at charities, faith organisations, and community centres.



USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergency services (calls are always free)

- If you need medical help or advice fast but it's not a life-threatening situation, you should contact NHS by calling **111** or visiting their [website](#), if you are calling about **mental health**, press 2.
- If it is an **emergency** and you are in **urgent** need of **medical help, police or fire brigade** you can call **999**.
- You can call **101** to speak with the police for **non-emergencies** and to report crimes that do not need an immediate police response.
- For help during a **mental health crisis**, call South London and Maudsley NHS Trust helpline open 24-hours at 0800 731 2864 (Option 1).

Local support

- If you need support about **domestic violence** for either yourself or someone you know, contact Gaia via phone: **020 7733 8724** - 8am - 6pm every day or email lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk. You can also call the 24-hour national helpline at 0808 2000 247.
- If you need support about reducing or stopping **drug or alcohol** use, contact Lambeth services at Lorraine Hewitt House via phone **020 3228 1500** or refer yourself online via their [website](#).

Lambeth Council

- **Lambeth Sanctuary Services** – Work to support and welcome sanctuary seekers. You can contact them at sanctuary@lambeth.gov.uk.
- **Lambeth Council** – If you need general help from the Council, you can call 020 7926 1000.
- **Lambeth Single Point of Access** (SPA) – Helps Lambeth adults aged 18 to 65 get the right mental health support. You can call 0800 090 2456 or visit www.lambethtogether.net.
- **Lambeth Adult Learning** – If you want to speak with someone about which courses are available in Lambeth. You can also call 020 7926 3304 or email adultlearning@lambeth.gov.uk.



“It is never too late, take a new breath and grow. Everyone is there to help you, if you help and take care of yourself. Be strong, calm and you will find a lot of opportunities.”

“There is a community for you here. I'd say you must be strong, don't take no for an answer.”

“And though we have not always known the right way, the world has seen your strength, and I'd want to say, you are more than your doubts, or what others see.”

“Nothing is random, you have a right to be here... wherever that is!”

