

# Our journey to excellence:

## How THH has used the Social Housing Equality Framework to improve services

### 2008 - 2013





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**Prepared by:**

James Caspell  
[james.caspell@towerhamletshomes.org.uk](mailto:james.caspell@towerhamletshomes.org.uk)  
020 7364 6137

## Accessible, inclusive and fair for residents and staff

### Introducing Tower Hamlets Homes

[Tower Hamlets Homes](#) (THH) is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), managing [Tower Hamlets Council](#)'s social housing, launched in July 2008 to deliver improvement in the quality of services delivered to residents, and to secure Decent Homes funding. Our vision is to be the best housing provider in the borough by 2014.

THH manages over 21,000 homes on behalf of the Council – around one in five of all homes in the borough. Around 60% of the properties we manage are tenanted. There are currently over 23,000 households on the housing register in Tower Hamlets, placing exceptional demand on social housing in the borough, particularly for larger properties.

Tower Hamlets is a vibrant and culturally diverse borough, characterised by a history of migration and multi-culturalism. Many residents face major challenges of chronic overcrowding and exclusion from the economic wealth of the global world financial centre located within the borough - Canary Wharf. The 2011 Census confirmed Tower Hamlets as the second most overcrowded local authority area in the UK. Over three-quarters of our tenants are from a Black or Minority Ethnic groups, whilst more than 20% are over 65.

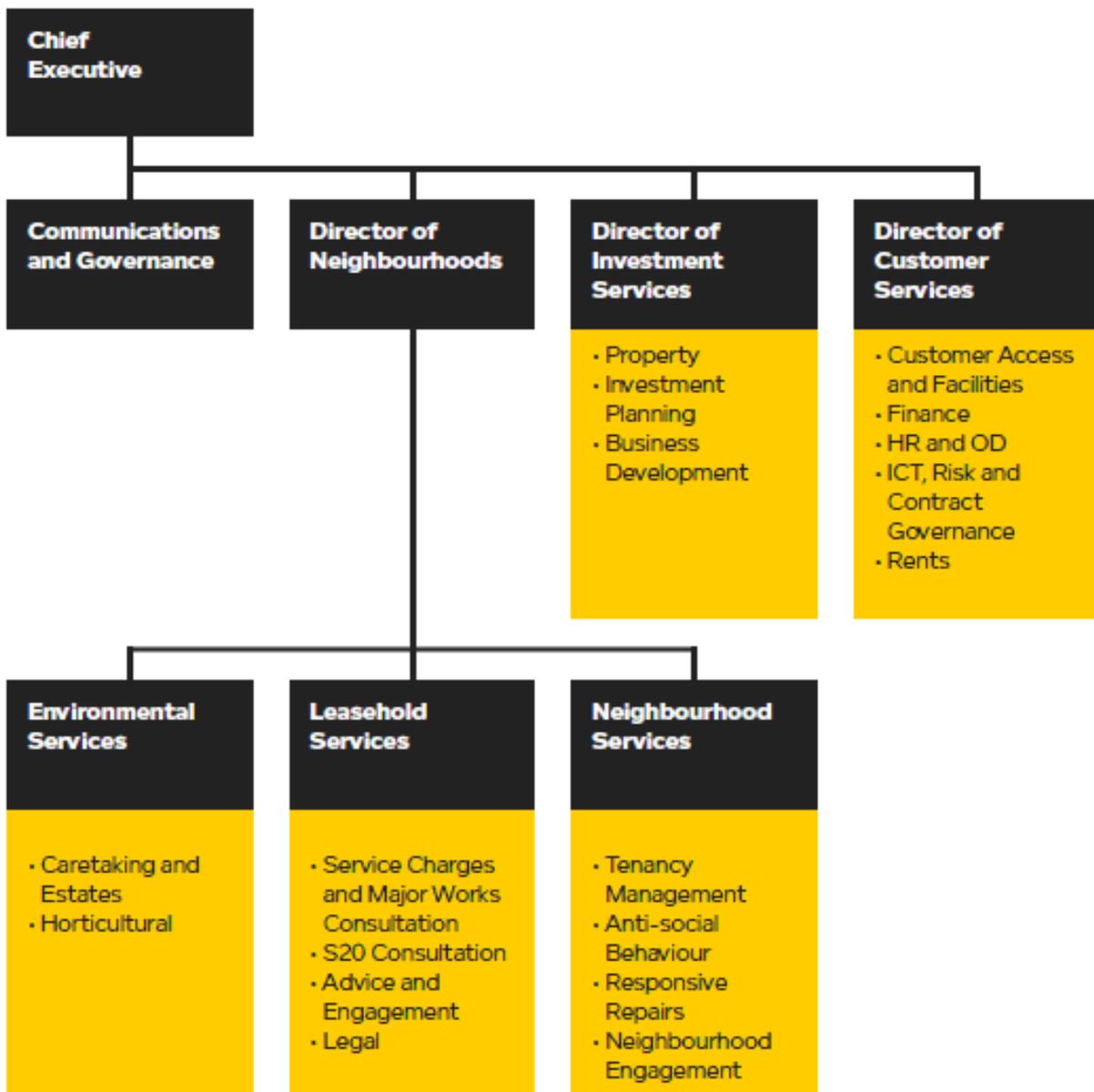
Since 2008, we have achieved a wide range of positive equality and diversity outcomes. These include:

- ✓ 77% of residents are now satisfied with the overall services we provide - up from 58% when we set up five years ago;
- ✓ In November 2010, THH was inspected by the Audit Commission, rating the organisation as "two star" with promising prospects for improvement. Diversity was an area where it was found that "strengths outweigh weaknesses";
- ✓ We have won several national and regional awards, including TPAS 2012 and 2013 Excellence in Equality and Diversity awards and the regional 2013 Excellence in the Community award;
- ✓ In 2012 we received the Customer Service Excellence accreditation, building on our successful peer review at Level 2 "Achieving" level of the Equality Framework in 2011;
- ✓ We are mid-way through a £181m [Decent Homes Programme](#) – one of the largest in the country.

We want to continue to build on this and our achievements by working closely with residents to deliver the best possible housing service for them.

We made an early corporate commitment to use the [Equality Framework](#) to embed the importance of meeting diverse needs in the way that we plan and improve services. Our current [Diversity Strategy 2012-14](#) is aligned with the five outcome areas of the Social Housing Equality Framework. In doing so, we have delivered real and sustainable outcomes that make services more accessible, inclusive and fair for residents and staff.

# Tower Hamlets Homes Structure Chart



# 1. Knowing our customers

## Collecting information

Since July 2008, Tower Hamlets Homes has prioritised the [collection and increased use of high quality information](#) about the diverse needs of our customers. Relevant customer data has been collected centrally, locally and with partners, allowing us to identify and respond to and mitigate inequality at an individual and community level.

Through **three dedicated resident profile projects** in 2010, 2012 and 2013 to supplement business-as-usual collection, we have gathered extensive equality profile information from residents across a range of characteristics, including those protected through the Equality Act 2010. Delivery against stretching collection targets has been monitored and delivered for the last two years through our **Diversity Scorecard** (Case Study 2.2). Our [Diversity Strategy 2012-14, contained a year 1 target](#) of 80% profile collection for both tenants and leaseholders, which was met three months early (See Case Study 2.1).



Staff use an [All About You](#) tool (updated following the Equality Act) incorporated into sign up packs and other day-to-day tenancy management processes. Information about access and communication needs is also captured through support visits to vulnerable residents and during Decent Homes consultation.

Our leasehold profile was historically low, a problem identified by both the Local Government Association and [Audit Commission](#) previously. As a result, we established a **Leasehold Profiling Project** in 2012-13, which delivered huge improvement in what we knew about our leaseholders. As a result, **we now hold 80% of information across six core equality strands for both resident and non-resident leaseholders for the first time.**

## Analysis and using information

**Customer information is regularly analysed to set, monitor and deliver equality objectives. Better data is allowing us to set, monitor and meet objectives and targets in relation to repairs, Decent Homes, overcrowding and financial inclusion, as well as identify and address inequality in satisfaction and access to services.**

We have learned that over 200 residents are wheelchair users, more than 300 are blind or have low vision and over 400 residents are deaf or hard of hearing. We are supporting these residents through our **aids and adaptations** service and our approach to [delivering Decent Homes](#).

Knowing that almost 20% of Tower Hamlets Homes' tenants are aged over 70 - many of whom have **age and disability related needs** - has meant that THH has placed a particular emphasis on providing vulnerable people with extra support.

To support residents who have told us they have specific needs, for example a physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, **we have implemented alerts for staff** when a resident or household's record is accessed on our central housing management system (see Case Study 1.4). A publicity campaign entitled, "Know Before You Go", a slogan conceived by the [Diversity Working Group](#), encourages staff to ensure records are checked prior to meeting or contacting a resident so that our services meet personal needs.

Our '[neighbourhood](#)' approach is central to delivering local, personalised services to residents and extending the range of help we offer to residents who need support. **Using extensive demographic, behavioural, attitudinal and geographic data**, we have produced **27 "Neighbourhood at a glance" profile booklets**. These provide a clear geographic breakdown of our residents locally, identifying community groups and diverse needs. These have been used to shape the annual [Neighbourhood Action Plans](#) - the local 'to-do' list for each neighbourhood, tackling priorities agreed with residents. Positive equality outcomes include:

- ✓ in **Collingwood** (Neighbourhood 11), we created a youth-orientated project in response to higher than average youth unemployment, and lower than average satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live (see Case Study 1.3);
- ✓ in **Poplar High Street**, the [Dot Dot Dot](#) community cohesion project helped to increase satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live from 53% at year end 2010/2011 to 65% by end of April 2013 (see Case Study 4.2).

**An extensive range of equality analyses and Equality Impact Assessments** have been carried out since 2008, with increased sophistication as the quality of our customer data has improved. This has allowed us to reduce inequality in terms of satisfaction and outcomes. For example, through equalities analysis we have

- ✓ [decreased arrears and overcrowding for the Somali community](#) (see Case Study 2.3);
- ✓ [improved access to and satisfaction with services for non-English speaking customers](#) (see Case Study 4.3);
- ✓ [improved access for disabled customers](#), having learned that 1 in 5 tenants are disabled (see Case Study 4.4).
- ✓ [created engagement opportunities for LGBT residents, working residents, White-East European, and younger residents](#) in response to lower than average satisfaction (see Case Study 3.1).

## Sharing information between partners

**We work with statutory and community partners to share relevant information ensure that the individual needs of customers are consistently addressed and tackle inequality that affects the local community.**

Working with the [Council](#), we have identified over 1,200 properties as **overcrowded** - over 12% of all tenanted properties. We identified that 77% of overcrowded households were those lacking one bedroom. A lack of supply had meant that it was unlikely that these

households would have been able to secure larger accommodation in the short-term. Through our [Diversity Working Group](#), an **Overcrowding Toolkit** was developed for all Neighbourhood Housing Officers, to systematically provide support to overcrowded households (see Case Study 1.5). We also work with the Council to facilitate mutual exchanges, and also to address shortage of supply. Positive outcomes include:

- ✓ Nearly **800 overcrowded households were provided with professional advice and support** (see Case Study 1.1). This resulted in 279 tenants receiving housing options advice, 59 repairs being undertaken, 30 external storage solutions offered, and 23 referrals to the Fire Brigade for a fire safety visit;
- ✓ In 2011/12, **15 new houses were built on council-owned land** we manage in Stepney, Bethnal Green and Wapping.

**Under-occupation** has been identified as a key issue in Tower Hamlets. One solution to this issue has been promoted through LBTH by property swapping. A monetary incentive is in place to encourage property swaps amongst under-occupier and overcrowded household which will partly reduce the impact of the Welfare Reform. So far:

- ✓ **We have employed dedicated Under-occupation Officers to facilitate moves** for this disproportionately older customer segment, working with relevant community and statutory partners;
- ✓ **In 2012-13 we assisted 36 under-occupied families to move home**, helping over-crowded families to move to homes more suitable for their needs.

A number of **vulnerable** residents also receive floating supporting through a number of our community and statutory partners (see Case Study 1.2):

- ✓ Over 120 residents are receiving additional support as a result of a [Getting to Know You](#) visit;
- ✓ Over 100 residents are contacted on a regular basis through the [Safe and Secure](#) scheme aimed specifically at older, disabled and otherwise vulnerable residents;
- ✓ [Tower Hamlets' Floating Support Service](#) provides support to over 450 vulnerable residents at any one time.

Data is also shared with our **repairs contractors**, [Mears](#), as well as **Decent Homes Contractors**. Repairs contractors' operatives are able to use a **password** when contacting vulnerable residents and carry a vulnerability awareness card, and there is a process in place to notify us where vulnerability is suspected directly through the relevant neighbourhood housing officer.

We work to ensure that customer information helps improve access and customer care for Decent Homes and **occupational therapy referrals for aids and adaptations**, as shown in the table below. The majority of OT outcomes have been for previously unknown needs (see Case Study 4.5).

	All households	Total number of OT referrals	Total number of OT works approved	% of programmed properties referred	% of programmed properties approved to receive OT works
<b>Decent Homes Programme Households</b>	2952	344	225	12%	8%

**Outcome: Tenant Profile Collection Progress: April 2010 – April 2013**

Characteristic	Collection at April 2010	Collection at April 2013	April 2013 target met? (80%)	Increase since April 2010
<b>Profile known across protected characteristics (tenants) %</b>				
Ethnicity	82%	99.39%	✓	↑ 17.39%
Gender	99%	100%	✓	↑ 1.00%
Disability	8%	96.44%	✓	↑ 88.44%
Age	80%	100%	✓	↑ 20.00%
Sexual orientation	13%	83.81%	✓	↑ 70.81%
Religion and belief	50%	88.46%	✓	↑ 38.46%
Gender reassignment	0%	30.61%	-	↑ 30.61%
Marriage and civil partnership	0%	24.53%	-	↑ 24.53%
Employment status	0%	21.22%	-	↑ 21.22%
Pregnancy and maternity	-	41 expected babies	-	-

**Outcome: Leasehold Profile Collection: April 2012 – April 2013**

Characteristic	Collection at April 2012	Collection at April 2013	April 2013 target met? (80%)	Increase since April 2012
<b>Profile known across protected characteristics (tenants) %</b>				
Ethnicity	19.60%	86.33%	✓	↑ 66.73%
Gender	97.86%	99.84%	✓	↑ 1.98%
Disability	17.19%	88.13%	✓	↑ 70.94%
Age	20.72%	86.53%	✓	↑ 65.81%
Sexual orientation	20.56%	85.75%	✓	↑ 65.19%
Religion and belief	21.71%	87.35%	✓	↑ 65.64%
Gender reassignment	0.45%	58.86%	-	↑ 58.41%
Marriage and civil partnership	0%	44.85%	-	↑ 44.85%
Employment status	0%	15.62%	-	↑ 15.62%

**Outcome: THH Tenant Profile, January 2013**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	55%
Male	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Disability</b>	<b>%</b>
Not disabled	82%
Disabled	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>%</b>
Asian Or Asian British: Bangladeshi	43%
White: British	21%
Prefer not to say	9%
White: Any Other White Background	4%
White: Unknown	3%
Asian Or Asian British: Unknown	3%
Black Or Black British: Somali	3%
Black Or Black British: Caribbean	3%
Black Or Black British: African	2%
White: Irish	2%
Black Or Black British: Other Black	1%
Asian Or Asian British: Other Asian	1%
Asian Or Asian British: Vietnamese	1%
Asian Or Asian British: Indian	1%
Asian Or Asian British: Chinese	1%
Any Other Ethnic Group	1%
Dual: Black African & White	1%
Asian Or Asian British: Pakistani	0.4%
Black Or Black British: Other African	0.4%
Dual: Other	0.3%
Dual: Black Caribbean & White	0.2%
Black Or Black British: Unknown	0.2%
Dual: Asian & White	0.1%
White: Other White	0.1%
Dual: Unknown	0.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Age band</b>	<b>%</b>
16 -19	0.2%
20-29	10%
30-39	23%
40-49	21%
50-59	17%
60-69	11%
70+	18%
Prefer not to say	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>%</b>
Heterosexual	63%
Prefer not to say	36%
Bisexual	0.4%
Gay	0.4%
Lesbian	0.1%
Other	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Religion or belief</b>	<b>%</b>
Muslim	53%
Prefer not to say	22%
Christian	17%
No religion	7%
Jewish	1%
Buddhist	0.4%
Other	0.3%
Hindu	0.2%
Sikh	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<b>%</b>
Married	91%
Single	6%
Separated marriage/civil partnership	1%
Widowed	1%
Prefer not to say	1%
Divorced	0.5%
Co-habiting	0.3%
Same-Sex registered civil partnership	0.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender as assigned at birth	57%
Prefer not to say	43%
Gender reassigned	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity (Households)</b>	<b>%</b>
Not applicable	99%
Baby less than 1 year old	1%
Expecting baby	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2. Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment



### Leadership, vision and commitment

Since 2008, THH has delivered a range of important equality outcomes. Our overall [organisational vision](#) is supported by the vision of successive [Diversity Strategies](#), to provide services that are accessible, inclusive and fair for residents and staff (see Case Study 2.1).

Objectives are developed in consultation with residents and are

shared with our contractors and community partners where required, such as ensuring that our repairs contractors address the diverse needs of customers when visiting our homes.

Our [values](#) define our relationship with residents, partner organisations and between staff, with “being fair and ethical – in everything we do” at the heart of the organisational culture which we are trying to develop.

For example, working in partnership with the [Ocean Somali Community Association](#) and Somali Integration Team has helped us to understand and meet the specific needs of Somali residents, enabling us to:

- ✓ **reduce rent arrears,**
- ✓ **address overcrowding;** and,
- ✓ **overcome barriers to accessing housing services** (see Case Study 2.3).

We have placed the Equality Framework at the heart of our approach to improvement, to ensure we can deliver our overall corporate vision and that of our Diversity Strategy.

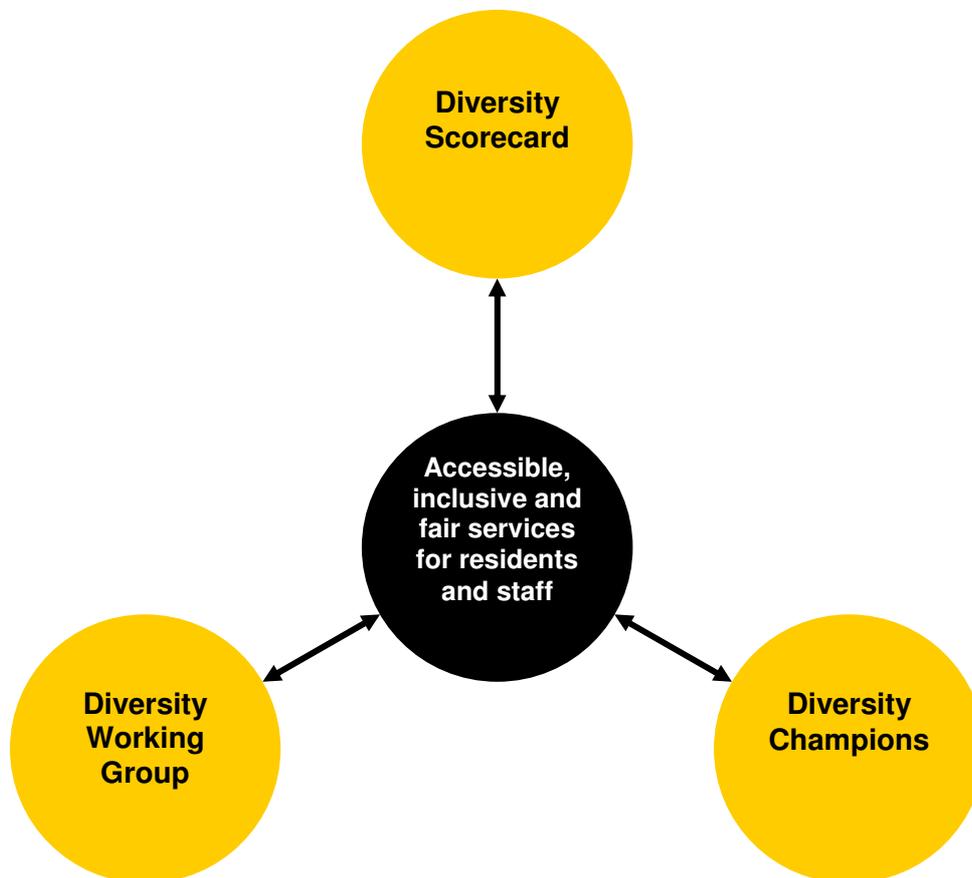
We work closely with the Council to address equality and diversity priorities and [contribute to One Tower Hamlets priorities as outlined in the Community Plan](#), in the Council’s [Housing Strategy](#) and [Overcrowding Reduction Strategy](#). We are active members of the **Tower Hamlets Equality Steering Group** which is made up of cross-borough agencies, and ensures that we are able to work together with statutory partners to achieve improved equality outcomes in line with the borough’s Single Equality Framework and towards the Council’s Equality Schemes for race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion and belief. Recently, we co-delivered the workshop to assist the Council in refreshing its Equality Scheme on age.

In November 2010, the Audit Commission concluded that THH “[Has] a strong corporate commitment to diversity, with sound processes that are producing valuable outcomes.” We have [shared more detailed feedback with residents](#) and used this to shape the programme of our Diversity Working Group, helping us to:

- ✓ [Ensure that our Decent Homes Programme makes homes more accessible](#);
- ✓ [Improve the way in which we meet language needs](#), improving satisfaction as a result;
- ✓ [Provide ideas and solutions to engage seldom heard groups and increase participation](#).

## Mainstreaming equality

The setting and delivery of equality objectives has been mainstreamed throughout the organisation, and monitored by the [Board](#) and Strategic Management Team. The delivery of the objectives of our Diversity Strategy is primarily through the Diversity Scorecard, Diversity Champions Staff Network and Diversity Working Group.



Established in 2009, our [Diversity Working Group](#) (DWG) is an advisory group of residents, partners and staff who work through diversity issues on a thematic basis. In the last four years this helped us to deliver the following outcomes to name a few:

- ✓ Delivered **practical improvements for disabled customers, increasing satisfaction** with our customer service (see Case Study 4.4);
- ✓ Develop an **Overcrowding Toolkit**, to provide practical support for these households, which resulted in over 800 support referrals or home visits;
- ✓ Identified and developed ways in which we **support vulnerable residents** (see Case Study 1.2), increasing our quality and quantity of partnership work for this customer group;
- ✓ In July 2010, the DWG helped us to design the “**Know before you go**” campaign in order to improve the collection and usage of customer profile information;
- ✓ **Improved the way in which we met language needs**, helping to understand how we could use different approaches for different language groups, with satisfaction amongst Somali and Bengali speakers increasing as a result.

In 2011, we refreshed our **Diversity Champions Staff Network** to better promote equality and diversity issues in the workplace. An action plan of 15 actions was proposed and prioritised by staff in October 2011 which required discrete projects to deliver improvements for staff and residents. By December 2012 they had all been delivered. Key achievements of the Network include:

- ✓ Delivered **THH’s first Diversity Awareness Day** in December 2011 which was attended by over 200 staff across all offices;
- ✓ Promoted awareness of mental health in the workplace, through awareness sessions for staff, and **Mental Health First Aiders Training** (see Case Study 5.2);
- ✓ Developed a **Religion and Belief e-learning programme**, this has been shared across the housing and local government sector.

In 2011, we also developed a **Diversity Scorecard** to help us to monitor and improve performance of key equality and diversity objectives (see Case Study 2.2). By using high level indicators aligned with the five Equality Framework outcome areas we have been able to measure our progress to excellence, and identify areas requiring increased focus:

- ✓ As a result of the insight provided by the Diversity Scorecard, **SMT commissioned a Leasehold Profiling Project** to better understand the diverse access and communication needs of our leaseholders, and residents who rent their properties;
- ✓ Monitoring THH’s **ethnic and gender average salary gaps** ensured that the issue maintained visibility across every service, with positive action initiatives devised in response;
- ✓ Enabling **high level monitoring of the delivery of Equality Impact Assessment Action Plans** has improved both the rate and quality of delivery.

## Equality Analysis

The mainstreaming of [Equalities Analysis and Equality Impact Assessments \(EqIAs\)](#) since 2009 has delivered improved outcomes when considering changes to existing services, and the development of new ones in accordance with the Equality Act.

Equality objectives arising out of EqIAs have been integrated into team plans and equality outcomes are being achieved, and monitored through the Diversity Scorecard. Improved outcomes as a result include:

- ✓ **108 equality objectives were delivered last year as a result of Equality Analysis and Equality Impact Assessments**, monitored by our Diversity Scorecard;

- ✓ **Developing diversionary initiatives with younger residents**, who were disproportionately alleged to perpetrate anti-social behaviour (see Case Study 1.3);
- ✓ **Initiating positive action initiatives** to promote opportunities for BME, women, disabled and LGBT staff and job seekers;
- ✓ **Ensure that Muslim leaseholders were not unfairly disadvantaged** – due to their religious belief - with the introduction of interest-bearing service charge repayment options.

## **Equality objectives and legal duties**

**We ensure that our services are compliant with public duties, and action has been taken to ensure that equality objectives are delivered to this effect, which is regularly monitored by senior management and the board. Improvements and compliance with legal duties are evidenced via:**

- ✓ Equality and cohesion priorities being **monitored regularly at [Board meetings](#)**, and equalities and diversity implications are required to be considered in **all reports to the Board**;
- ✓ **100% of Year 1 (2012/13) Diversity Strategy objectives have been delivered**, and 29% of Year 2 (2013/14) delivered so far;
- ✓ In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we **[publish equality information annually](#)**, as well as corporate equalities objectives;
- ✓ Extensive **Disability Discrimination Act/Equality Act access audits** have been carried out on area housing offices and our Resident Resource Centre, with the subsequent action plan resulting in a range of improvements.

Over **70% of tenants receive full or part housing benefit**. In the socio-economic climate of social housing in Tower Hamlets, and in response to the changes as a result of the **Welfare Reform Act**, a number of our services have equalities objectives in relation **financial inclusion** (see Case Study 2.6).

## **Communicating and promoting commitments**

**Improvements have been made in how we communicate with residents, staff and partners in relation to the delivery of equality objectives. We champion improved outcomes, responding to diverse customer needs and promoting good relations.**

Regular communications such as [Neighbourhood Newsletters](#), [Open Door](#) (our borough-wide magazine for residents – see Case Study 2.5), website and - more recently - a range of new social media including [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and YouTube, provides opportunities to access our services. Scrutinising and challenging our own performance is done in consultation with residents and captured within the [Annual Report](#) which sets out our performance over the last financial year and outlines our future commitment to residents through the local offers. In 2011/12, our Annual Report was highly commended as a regional finalist at the TPAS Awards 2013 (see Case Study 2.4).

Internally, our weekly staff newsletter, **News and Views**, provides regular updates on progress in terms of equality and diversity, and equality and diversity special editions are used to mark specific events of interest, such as **IDAHO day in 2013** and **THH's first Diversity Awareness Day** in 2011.

In November 2010 Tower Hamlets Homes launched its '**publications in other formats' web page** which allows residents to access corporate documents and residents booklets in various formats ranging from translated documents to talking leaflets for the visually impaired. Analytics based on the Tower Hamlets Homes website shows that:

- ✓ by March 2013 there had been almost **2000 uses** of the 'publications in other formats' web page;
- ✓ by end of March 2013, there had been a **21% increase on the number of views of Bengali translated content** from the 'publications in other formats' web page since March 2011.

THH has won **Plain English Awards** for the 2011/12 Annual Report, Decent Homes after-care booklet, and Open Door, having been nominated by residents.

## **Procurement and commissioning**

**We ensure that all relevant services provided by contractors help us to deliver our shared equality objectives, and use our procurement process to deliver shared equality objectives and promote supplier diversity.**

For example, an objective of a recent tendering process for a £100k per annum exercise for market research contract ensured that the following outcomes would be realised through contracted services:

- ✓ **Collection of profile data** through business-as-usual satisfaction surveys was possible;
- ✓ **Analysis and cross-tabulation by equality strand** of collected customer insight by all protected characteristics was possible;
- ✓ **Able to meet the linguistic needs of a diverse community** – as a result, between 6-10% of satisfaction calls take place in a language other than English.

**We have increased resident participation and scrutiny** in procurements exercises. For example:

- ✓ In 2010/11, our [Repairs Investment Group](#), and [Repairs Procurement Group](#) provided **oversight of our last repairs contract re-procurement** exercise in 2011, and of day-to-day service delivery;
- ✓ In 2010/11, our **BME Mens group advised that having too many sub-contractors meant that language and cultural barriers were more likely.** The repairs contract procurement process took this into account, with the successful tender being the one that use the least sub-contractors;
- ✓ In 2011/12, **five residents were trained** by accredited provider in procurement processes, to help ensure that customer needs were embedded in selection;
- ✓ In 2012/13 a **member of the resident scrutiny panel was included** throughout the assessment process for our market research contract.

**Outcomes of ongoing contract management** include:

- ✓ During the procurement process for Decent Homes contractors for years 3-5, we have agreed that **for each £1m spent, our Decent Homes contractors will secure a place for one apprentice;**

- ✓ With an agreed target of 50, At the end of 2012 our **Decent Homes contractors were employing over 80 local employees;**
- ✓ Of the £8.5 million spent with suppliers since the Decent Homes Programme commenced, **£5.3 million (62%) has been spent with companies based within Borough;**
- ✓ Developed a **good practice briefing on Ramadan** for all Decent Homes Contractors, to improve satisfaction amongst Muslim residents;
- ✓ Developing **easy-read communication cards** through our Diversity Working Group for repairs contractors, which [MITIE](#) now use on other contracts in the sector;
- ✓ In 2012/13, we developed a **Diversity Action Plan through the Diversity Working Group** with KeepMoat/Apollo;
- ✓ Provided **LGBT Training with Stonewall Housing, for Decent homes and Repairs contract operatives** to attend. We are currently exploring the feasibility of rolling-out LGBT "tool box talks" for all operatives working on our contracts;
- ✓ Delivered a range of **community-based improvements through our Decent Homes programme** (see Case Study 2.7).

## Promotion of equality and participation

**We have increasingly utilised positive action initiatives to improve participation of under-represented groups on our board, resident scrutiny panel and engagement forums. Outcomes include:**

- ✓ In 2010 we recruited a Bangladeshi woman **Board** member following a targeted recruitment campaign, having identified under-representation;
- ✓ Between May 2011 and May 2013, the percentage of board members who:
  - Are **women increased** from 33% to 40%
  - Are **Black or Minority Ethnicity increased** from 33% to 50%
  - **Live in Tower Hamlets increased** from 67% to 90%
- ✓ In 2011/12, we recruited one Somali and four Bangladeshi residents to our **Resident Panel**, through targeted recruitment in the [London Bangla](#) and local community organisations;
- ✓ In 2010, we **participated in two Somali community festivals** and recruited a number of Somali residents on to our **Getting Involved Register**;
- ✓ [A diversity and equality analysis of our Getting Involved Register in January 2011](#) revealed that we have been more successful in recruiting residents to become "involved" that are broadly reflective of our customer base. Our strengths in terms of reflectiveness are ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, whilst areas that require continued improvement are gender, age and religion and belief;
- ✓ In February 2011, an analysis of the **Diversity Working Group** revealed that of men were under-represented. A publicity campaign was launched to recruit more men, both on our [website](#) and via email (which we know from an [equality analysis men are more likely to use](#)). As a result the number of men attending the Group increased.

## Leading by example

**Senior officers have demonstrated personal leadership and accountability to promote the importance of equality and cohesion objectives within the organisation and with partners.**

- ✓ **Diversity Champions at Board and SMT level** have ensured strategic visibility, and promoted the importance of addressing diverse needs of all community groups across all service areas;
- ✓ Our equalities lead delivered a seminar jointly with LBTH for a group of students from **Queen Mary's MSc. Migration programme** in 2011, including a presentation on the issues which new migrants and refugees face relating to housing. Since then we have provided advice and expertise to several of the students in preparation for their research dissertations;
- ✓ Our Director of Finance and Customer Services has acted as a **Senior Champion for the LGBT Staff Network**, since spring 2012;
- ✓ Following our success in the TPAS Southern Region Excellence in Equality and Diversity award for our sector-leading work around community language provision in spring 2013, our Chief Executive was invited to write an [article for The Guardian explaining the importance of community language provision](#). He was also invited to write another [article for the Guardian to share practice relating to the issues older people face in housing](#);
- ✓ **THH's Ageing Inquiry report** was officially launched by **Cabinet Member for Housing**, Cllr Khan on 29th April 2013. Cllr Khan has since had an article talking about our work published by **24 Housing**;
- ✓ After a series of homophobic leaflets appeared in Tower Hamlets including several THH estates, we were the **first social landlord in the borough to condemn these hate incidents**. We responded publicly with a [statement on our website](#) and in [our Open Door newsletter](#), with a statement from our Chief Executive. This work was [acknowledged by a national newspaper and local LGBT community organisation](#).

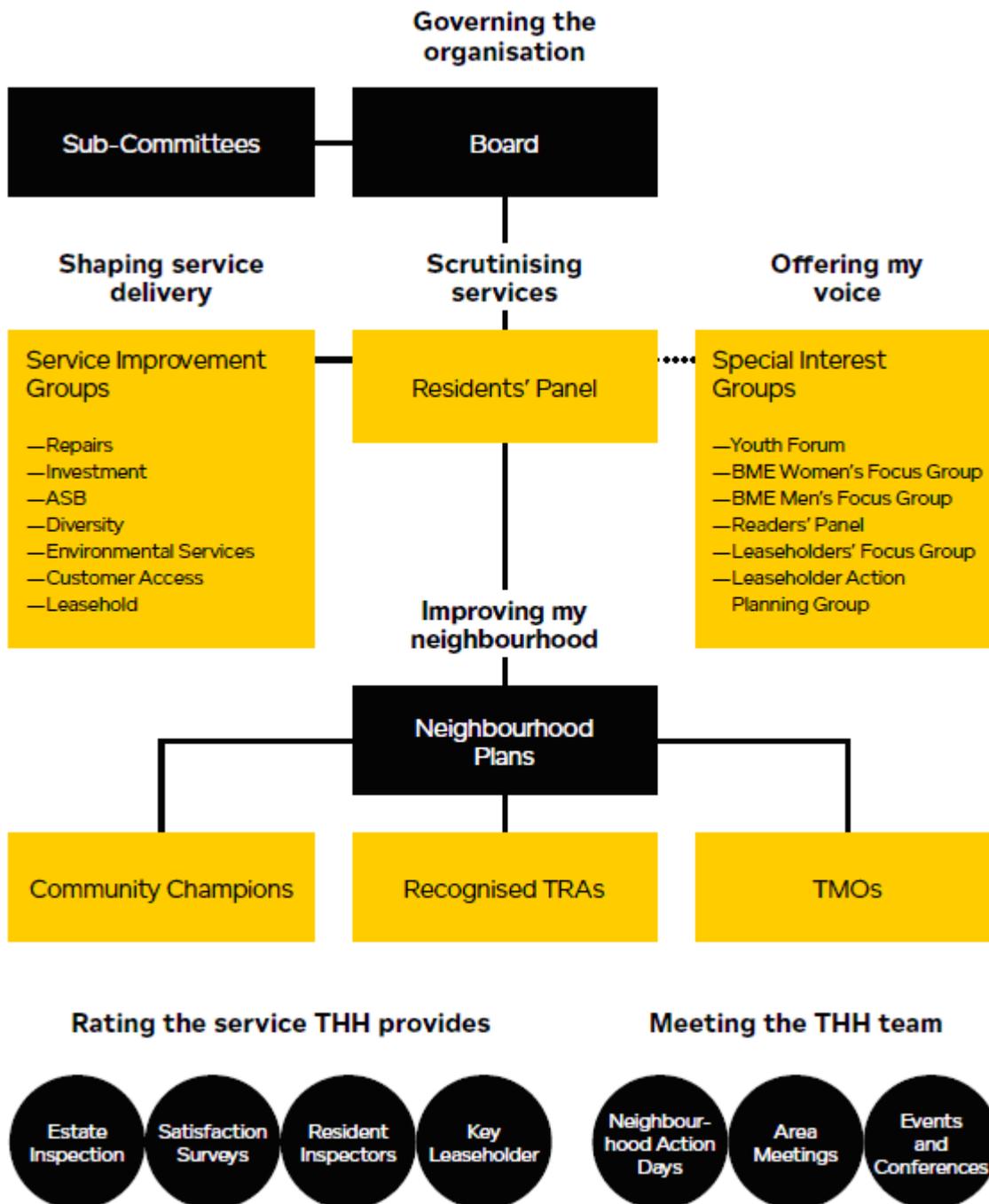
## Good practice and benchmarking

**We have benchmarked our equality achievements against others in the sector, and have gained a reputation for sharing good practice. We have received a range of other external achievements and awards as a result. These include:**

- ✓ **Regional TPAS Award for Excellence in the Community**. The winning Multi-Faith Project encouraged religious groups to organise celebrations for other faith groups. For example, a local church congregation organised Eid parties for the Muslim community;
- ✓ **Winner of the 2012 National and Regional TPAS Award for Excellence in Equality & Diversity**, for our Somali Tenants Engagement Project;
- ✓ **Winner of the 2013 Regional TPAS Award for Excellence in Equality & Diversity** for our "We Speak Your Language" Project, and finalist for the National Award;
- ✓ **Finalist for Chartered Institute of Marketing Award 2012** –for the young apprentice recruitment campaign autumn 2011;
- ✓ A number of staff have been invited to speak at equality and diversity related conferences and deliver training, specifically on **resident engagement, customer insight and mystery shopping**;
- ✓ Published a **Resident-Led Scrutiny Best Practice Guide**;
- ✓ Benchmarking tenant profile information on Housemark shows that as of March 2013, we held **more tenant profile information than any other ALMO in London**;
- ✓ **Two members of staff are Equality Framework peer assessors for the Local Government Association**, which allows THH to learn and share best practice across the UK; THH was awarded the **Customer Service Excellence** Standard in December 2012.

### 3. Customer engagement

#### Community engagement structures



THH has placed an increasing focus on the importance of engaging service users to agree priorities and scrutinise their delivery. Performance and satisfaction across a range of services has emerged as a result. Our [Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Structure](#) allows different customer groups to engage with us in ways which are

convenient to them. Our [Residents' Panel](#) driven improvement to a number of to improve a number of services.

By providing an increasing [range of opportunities to be involved](#), residents from across the community have helped to improve a range of services through [Service Improvement Groups](#), including our [Diversity Working Group](#). In line with our [Resident Engagement Agreement](#), we provide a range of other ways to participate such as a [Residents' Panel](#), a [Readers' Panel](#), [26 residents' associations](#), [mystery shopping – for which we have provided training](#).

To address inequality in engagement and satisfaction with different parts of our service, we have held a range of [special interest focus groups](#) and engagement projects to proactively engage with **seldom heard and vulnerable groups**. This has included:

- ✓ A [Disabled residents focus group](#)
- ✓ An award-winning [Somali Tenants Engagement Project](#) (see Case Study 2.3);
- ✓ An award-winning [Multi-Faith Celebrations Project](#) (see Case Study 3.2);
- ✓ A **Mosque Engagement Project**
- ✓ **BME Mens'** Focus Group
- ✓ [BME Women's](#) Group
- ✓ [LGBT Focus Group and Drop-Ins](#)
- ✓ Award-winning [youth engagement projects](#) (see Case Study 3.1);
- ✓ [Ageing Inquiry](#) for older residents (see Case Study 3.3);
- ✓ [Working residents](#)

We monitor participation across community groups through [Resident Engagement Impact Assessments](#), and have shaped and tailored our approach in order to ensure that our engagement offer is accessible, inclusive and fair for all residents. In 2009/10, just 51% of tenants were satisfied that their views were taken into account. The 2010 STATUS survey showed that 61% of tenants were satisfied that their views are taken into account – **a 10% increase**.

Between 2008-2013 the following outcomes have been achieved:

- ✓ Our [Residents' Panel](#) had undertaken a number of service reviews, most notably one to help us to **improve our Anti-Social Behaviour service** (see Case Study 3.4). Scrutiny reviews are currently underway on engagement and estate inspections, in response to direct feedback from **resident conferences in each areas**.
- ✓ A **best practice guide on resident scrutiny** has been published and shared across the sector (see Case Study 2.8);
- ✓ Over 500 residents have registered for the ['Getting Involved Register'](#);
- ✓ [26 Residents associations](#) are well supported with dedicated staff, resources and grant funding. Grants support community initiatives with up to £500 for community events or day trips, and up to £5,000 for community projects and estate improvements such as community food gardens to increase community cohesion. Last year saw a range of [Jubilee events](#) take place across neighbourhoods to foster community cohesion;
- ✓ The [Residents' Resource Centre](#) in Mile End is available for residents to use;
- ✓ A [Readers' Panel](#) has helped to provide clarity and common sense of publications. As a result, we were a finalist for the 2013 Regional **TPAS Award for Excellence in Annual Reports** and have received a number of **Plain English Awards** for core documents;

- ✓ **Mystery shopping by trained 'resident inspectors'** has led to practical changes such as a floor walker greeting and directing customers in our face-to-face receptions;
- ✓ Resident involvement in **estate inspections** is helping to improve the standard of estates from a resident perspective, with outcomes advertised on our website and neighbourhood noticeboard in an easy-read format;
- ✓ Establishing a number of **older people's champions** as a result of our [Ageing Inquiry](#), to ensure that older people have a voice in the shaping and improvement of services;
- ✓ **Resident involvement in selecting the repairs contractor** in 2011 resulted in the appointment of a contractor that offers a greater choice of appointment times, whilst feedback from the **BME Men's Group** meant that we are now aware that too many sub-contractors can compound communication and language problems;
- ✓ BME residents have also influenced the delivery of services, such as **our offer for fully tiled bathrooms with showers following engagement with the Bangladeshi community** as part of the Decent Homes pilots in 2010;
- ✓ In 2010, a set of **older and disabled residents** were involved in **vulnerability training** for staff as we developed our approach to identifying and assisting vulnerable residents. Hearing residents' perspectives on vulnerability gave staff an appreciation of the types of vulnerability amongst our communities and to consider the responses that might be appropriate.

Outcomes specific to our engagement **with young people** include:

- ✓ Our award-winning **Bling My Hood Project** (see Case Study 3.1);
- ✓ At the **2011 Youth Conference**, young people told us that it was hard to find work when they don't have the right skills or experience. To tackle this and offer employment to young people in Tower Hamlets, we **set up a scheme to offer apprenticeships** – we received over 700 applications and were able to offer positions to 16 young Tower Hamlets residents aged between 16-24;
- ✓ Recruiting **Youth Ambassadors for each neighbourhood**, to the [Resident's Panel](#) and working with ELBA and Nomura bank to provide our Youth Ambassadors with mentoring and work experience;
- ✓ The **Youth Make A Difference** fund offers grants of up to £500 to people aged between 16-24 who want to run projects in Tower Hamlets Homes neighbourhoods. Eligible grants are decided by the [Youth Panel](#) themselves;
- ✓ In 2010, we worked in partnership with [Osmani Trust](#) to engage young people and deliver outreach activities and workshops. The project **reduced the number of incidents related to ASB** being perpetrated by the targeted group of young people, and built bridges of communication and trust between the older residents (making the ASB reports) and the younger residents (that are allegedly responsible for the ASB).

We have also engaged with community groups on the basis of **religion and belief** to deliver equality outcomes and priorities, where we have identified an equalities need or opportunity:

- ✓ In 2012, an award-winning **Multi-Faith Celebrations Project** (Case Study 3.2) encouraged local communities to embrace another's traditions and cultures, which in turn brought together local people, **encouraged interfaith understanding and promoted community cohesion**.

## Effective engagement

**Through various engagement forums, a wide range of customer groups are involved in setting equality objectives and monitoring their delivery. Increased satisfaction with engagement and service outcomes has resulted.**

An [Equality Impact Assessment into Strategic Engagement](#) in 2011/12 revealed a number of examples of effective engagement:

- ✓ A **strong correlation between engagement and satisfaction with our overall service**; the more satisfied our residents are with engagement, the more satisfied they are with our overall service.
- ✓ Of those residents who gave an "excellent" rating for satisfaction with the overall services provided by THH, 79% gave a rating of "excellent" and "good" for opportunities to get involved;
- ✓ There was a **high satisfaction rating from those with whom THH had so far engaged with** (White British residents, Somali residents, Bangladeshi residents and women).
- ✓ The **diversity of our Getting Involved Register (GIR)** was been found to be broadly reflective of our customer profile, with seldom heard and more vulnerable groups positively over-represented. As of March 2012:
  - ✓ 73% of residents on the GIR were BME;
  - ✓ 44% were female residents;
  - ✓ 41% were Muslim residents;
  - ✓ 33% were disabled residents;
  - ✓ 8% were LGB residents;
  - ✓ 4% were in the 16-25 age group.

However, areas we still needed to improve were:

- Working age residents were the least satisfied amongst age groups;
- LGB residents were less satisfied with engagement than straight residents;
- White – East European residents were less likely to be satisfied with engagement.

In 2012, we launched LEAP 2012, a year-long programme to improve the quality of customer service, as part of which we secured the [Customer Service Excellence Accreditation](#). Through this we undertook a range of workshops and customer journey mapping exercises to engage with those less satisfied with our customer service, including **residents of working age**. A range of improvements have taken place as a result:

- ✓ Shaped the **training programme for all housing advisors around the core expectations which residents had of us**, who were trained as a result through the Summer of 2012;
- ✓ A set of "**House Rules**" were launched at Tower Hamlets Homes' staff conference in June 2012. This details the kind of behaviour that staff will commit to, and which they expect of each other to enable them to carry out their work and provide better services for residents;
- ✓ Ensured that we held over **36 evening meetings** in 2012/13, in response to feedback from working residents who were less satisfied with opportunities with engagement that were largely held in daytime hours;
- ✓ Similarly following feedback from working residents, front-counters are open on **Saturday mornings** to suit working residents, and at 542 Roman Road we are now

open late on a **Monday evening**.

A further **Equality Analysis of the Satisfaction of LGB residents** in May 2012 revealed that lesbian, gay and bisexual residents were 6 % less likely to be satisfied with opportunities to get involved than straight residents. In order to ensure that we are more accessible, inclusive and fair for LGB residents:

- ✓ We now hold **housing surgeries for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents** every third Thursday of the month;
- ✓ In 2012, we held **an LGBT focus group** to provide resident scrutiny of how we support residents through **hate crime**;
- ✓ We are working more closely with **Stonewall** and **Rainbow Hamlets**, Tower Hamlets' community organisation for lesbian gay and transgendered people.
- ✓ **In 2013 we provided training** for our front line staff, and those of repairs and Decent Homes contractors, to reduce stigma and promote inclusiveness.

In 2012, we held a Diversity Working Group and subsequent focus group with **White-East Europeans**, engaging with this customer group for the first time. We have increased the use of electronic and self-service channels for Polish and other East European Languages as a result, in particular digital social media including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The **Resident Panel Scrutiny Review of Engagement** in spring 2012 found that, of those on the Getting Involved Register:

- ✓ 84% were aware of the opportunity to participate in their local neighbourhood TRA
- ✓ 80% were aware of the opportunity to participate in their local estate inspection
- ✓ 71% were aware of the opportunity to participate in Service Improvement Groups

Our **Monthly Satisfaction Surveys** show that of a sample of over 2000 residents surveyed between 2010 and 2013:

- ✓ The rating of THH **taking views into account increased** from 39% in 2010/11 to 53% in 2012/13;
- ✓ **For Bangladeshi residents this measure increased** 38% to 56% in the same period;
- ✓ **For disabled residents this measure increased** from 43% to 53%;
- ✓ **For residents over 65 this measure increased** from 51% to 57%.
- ✓ **Awareness of opportunities to get involved** in shaping THH's services increased from 51% in 2010/11 to 62% in 2012/13;
- ✓ **For Bangladeshis this measure increased** from 42% to 51% over the same period;
- ✓ **For disabled resident this increased** from 47% to 57%;
- ✓ **For residents over 65 this increased** from 50% to 67%.

In March 2011, we identified that the **Somali community** was a seldom heard group. We had no Somalis participating in our formal resident engagement structure and the group was hugely under-represented on our Getting Involved Register. To understand why, we initiated the **award-winning Somali Tenants Engagement Project** (Case Study 2.3), in which we carried out personal interviews with a sample of Somali tenants and community agencies. In the lifetime of the project, we also held two focus groups with Somali tenants. Our Somali tenants are now in a much improved position in terms of satisfaction and access to our

services. Through a range of improvements we have ensured our services are more accessible, inclusive and fair for this community group:

- ✓ Satisfaction with THH on providing opportunities to get involved in things we do is now 91% for Somali tenants (2011/12);
- ✓ Satisfaction of Somali tenants with THH keeping them informed rose from 58% (2009/10) to 81% (2011/12);
- ✓ Similarly, satisfaction with THH returning calls when we say we will rose from 43% (2010/11) to 76% (2011/12) for Somali tenants.

In equality terms, the outcomes of the project moved Somali tenants from one of least satisfied community groups, to one of the most satisfied – both with engagement and our overall service.

## 4. Responsive services, access and customer care

### Tackling harassment and domestic abuse

Working in partnership with the Council and relevant statutory and community agencies, performance on dealing with harassment, hate crime and domestic abuse is monitored, analysed and reported regularly. Where inequality and specific needs have been recognised, we have responded proactively to improve outcomes.

THH is actively involved in borough-wide partnership initiatives to address hate crimes and promote community cohesion. Victims of hate incidents are supported through [No Place for Hate](#), run in conjunction with the Council. As part of an agreed action plan for every resident we may offer:

- ▶ Properties secured with stronger doors and window locks;
- ▶ A personal safety alarm and access to a spy hole camera;
- ▶ An out-of-hours visit from an enforcement officer;
- ▶ A home safety visit from the London Fire Brigade.

At a strategic level, the Anti-Social Behaviour Manager attends various multi-agency groups and forums. Agreements with the civil enforcement service helps with the provision of two teams that patrol each day until midnight and at times up to 4.00am. THH staff attend weekly intelligence sharing meetings with the Police Safer Neighbourhoods team and plan joint patrols when needed. They attend ward panel meetings where local borough residents decide on police priorities for their ward.

The **Tower Hamlets' Hate Incidents Panel (HIP)** was set up to review and co-ordinate service provision for hate incidents. HIP facilitates, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety. We are a standing member of the panel and we mandatorily refer all reports of hate crime to the panel.

The Panel helps us to:

- ✓ Share information to **increase the safety of residents** who live and work in Tower Hamlets, and are victims or witnesses of hate incidents.
- ✓ **Review cases** and ensure that all possible strategies for increasing the safety of victims or witnesses are implemented, and impose sanctions to deter repeat offending.
- ✓ **Monitor the implementation of local policies** in relation to specific cases.
- ✓ Contribute to the **development of best practice**.
- ✓ Provide **clear professional advice** to the relevant agencies involved.
- ✓ **Identifies policy issues arising from casework** and raises issues through the appropriate channels.



We work as part of a Borough-wide partnership to reduce the impact of hate crime, and reports involving criminal behaviour are investigated by the Council's Hate Crime Team, supported by THH officers. In 2011/12 we delivered:

- ✓ 72 **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts**
- ✓ 41 referrals to **mediation**
- ✓ 75 **referrals to the drug and alcohol services**

Staff make successful use of a wide range of intervention and enforcement powers in conjunction with partner agencies. Since April 2010 the service has delivered the following outcomes actions in order to reduce mate crime, harassment and domestic violence anti-social behaviour:

- ✓ Facilitated **parenting agreements, surveillance, CCTV, professional witnesses, noise abatement orders**, good neighbour agreements, professional witnesses, injunctions, Notices of Seeking Possession, Anti-social Behaviour Orders and evictions.
- ✓ Made 45 referrals to the **Youth Offending Team** which offers various diversionary activities.
- ✓ The **Family Intervention Project** has worked with 14 families - in ten cases the anti-social behaviour stopped completely and it reduced in others.
- ✓ Five Tower Hamlets Homes' residents have completed a 13 week **course in parenting skills** – called 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities'. Run by our ASB team's Family Intervention Project, the course was attended by parents who were having problems with their children who were causing ASB.
- ✓ Most of the 35 referrals to the drug and alcohol team were alleged perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and in 64 % of cases a referral has resulted in an end to the anti-social behaviour.
- ✓ [In November 2010, Crispin Blunt MP, Minister of Prisons and Youth Justice, visited our Community Payback](#) scheme in the Globe Town neighbourhood. This is a scheme where people are sentenced by the courts to do between 40 and 300 hours of community work, instead of going to prison.

In responding to **domestic violence**, [THH provides comprehensive information](#) and offers victim support including out-of-hours visits by the estate-based enforcement officers, CCTV, a home safety visit and a personal alarm.

**Domestic Violence Champions** are based in each office to support frontline staff; they attend the Multi-agency Domestic Violence Forum and Safety Planning panel which deals with high risk cases and receive a fortnightly list of all cases referred. **All Neighbourhood Housing Officers are trained** to identify and record domestic violence and make appropriate referrals including emergency accommodation. Training has also been provided to caretakers, technical staff, and to repairs contractors' operatives by Tower Hamlets Victim Support.

A central register of all domestic violence cases is accessible at each local housing office; we uses the Multi-Agency Referral and Assessment Committee (MARAC) when appropriate and each of our neighbourhood offices has a domestic violence champion who attends MARAC meetings to discuss any input required.

We regularly circulate domestic [violence reporting and support information](#) in partnership with the Council and Local Strategic Partnership. This includes leaflets in [Bengali](#) and [Somali](#), the most widely read languages of our customers after English. Those who want to remain in their tenancy are also offered extra locks and fire proof letterboxes. We also work with LBTH to provide a sanctuary scheme. Quarterly reports are provided by the Council's Domestic Violence team. Our approach to Domestic Violence and outcomes that have been delivered as a result are outlined in more detail within Case Study 4.1.

## Providing accessible services

**We have used customer information and engagement to ensure that we provide accessible services to all community groups, working in particular to improve the level of access for linguistic and disabled groups. Satisfaction has increased for these groups as a result.**

As over three quarters of our tenants are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background, the access barriers typically experienced to services by new minority ethnic groups are a key consideration in the delivery of services. **Over 7 % of our tenants are unable to read English**; the most widely spoken languages of our residents, other than English, are Bengali, Sylheti, Somali, Chinese, Vietnamese, Turkish and Arabic. Similar access barriers also exist for residents with physical, sensory, mental health and learning disabilities, as well as other customers groups, such as breastfeeding mothers. As a result, over the last few years we have [developed a number of tools to improve access to our services](#). The number of disabled resident describing our overall service as "Excellent" or "Good" has risen from 57% (2009/10) to 61% (2012/13) as a result.

Our award-winning "**We Speak Your Language**" Project has made Tower Hamlets Homes' services more accessible to residents who can't speak or read English (see Case Study 4.3).

As a result of the project:

- ✓ the **number of Bengali-speaking residents who feel that Tower Hamlets Homes keeps them informed about their housing services has risen**; in 2010/11 it was just 59% - now it is over 76% in 2012/13 (year to date).
- ✓ In the same period, **the number of Bengali-speaking residents accessing THH's services has increased** from 80% to 95%.
- ✓ **The number of Somali residents accessing our services has also increased**, from 59% to 85%.

## Take up of services

**Access and take up is monitored across all services, with any inequality identified used driving service improvement priorities. [Equalities Analysis](#) has been carried out to monitor both take-up and satisfaction, with over 108 actions taking place in 2011/12 to address unequal take up. Analysis and objectives are published, with actions to mitigate inequality monitored through Team Plans, or as stand-alone Equalities Action Plans through our Diversity Scorecard.**

We have tailored our Decent Homes Programme in order to meet the diverse needs of residents and promote equal access. By tailoring our approach down to a household level, we have delivered a range of support measures to maximise the take-up of our Decent Homes offer. These include:

- ✓ provided extra support arrangements available throughout the day, such as **respite and prayer facilities**;
- ✓ maximised the identification and provision of **aids and adaptations** for older and disabled residents, working in partnership with the Council's Occupational Therapy team;
- ✓ incorporated an **Older and Disabled Person Decorations** offer;
- ✓ Undertaken a **vulnerability home visit for all** of those residents who wanted one, or we identified as potentially vulnerable.
- ✓ knowing that around half of our residents are Muslims, we have established processes with our contractors to **ensure that a Decent Homes accommodates Ramadan** and other religious or cultural traditions.

As a result:

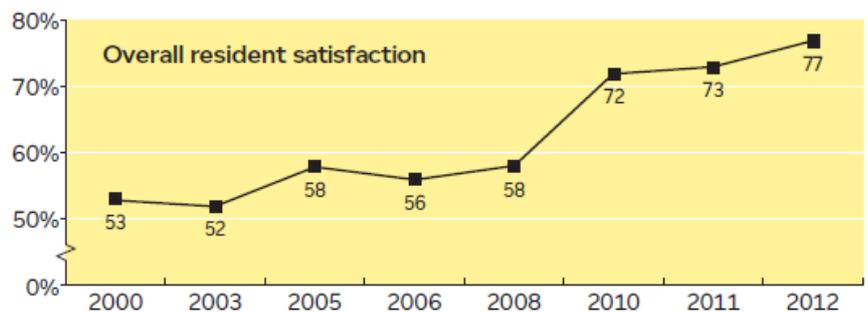
- ✓ As of February 2013, the **overall refusal rate on the Decent Homes Programme** was just 4.6%, within a target of 5%.
- ✓ In 2012/13 **we decorated 180 properties** who qualified for our Older and Disabled Persons Decorations scheme, as part of Decent Homes works. 164 older residents were eligible for the decorations because of their age, whilst 16 residents were eligible due to having a disability.
- ✓ In Year's 1 and 2, 344 referrals resulted in **225 aids and adaptations** being installed. (see Case Study 4.5)

Other service-specific examples of tailoring services to promote equal take-up include:

- ✓ **Providing a temporary lift during the lift repairs** at Ansell House in May 2010, as 11 residents had mobility issues;
- ✓ In October 2010, 3% of the letters regarding the location of asbestos in particular blocks were sent in **Large Print** in response to requests for information in this format.

## Assessing satisfaction

**Overall resident satisfaction is now 77%**, (when we were set up in 2008, it was 58%). In just 4 years we've improved resident satisfaction by a third, based on successive Status surveys. Areas where we've performed particularly well include environmental services, communications and customer services.



Satisfaction has also increased in the following areas, comparing 2012 with 2011 figures:

- ✓ Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live – up from 65% to 71%;
- ✓ Internal cleaning – up from 63% to 74%;
- ✓ External cleaning – up from 65% to 73%;
- ✓ Keeping people informed about what is important to them – up from 71% to 77%;
- ✓ Staff thought of as helpful – up from 67% to 69%;
- ✓ Satisfaction with ASB service up from 52% to 57%.

Aside from those already mentioned, our ability to baseline and benchmark inequality in terms of satisfaction has helped us to reduce inequality between groups, and increase satisfaction across all groups. For example:

- ✓ In 2012/13, we **reduced the overall service satisfaction gap between White British and BME tenants** by 7%. As of February 2013, BME tenants were slightly more satisfied than White British tenants.
- ✓ The **overall satisfaction gap between disabled and non-disabled residents has reduced** between 2009/10 and 2011/12.

## Human rights

**Since December 2010, we have taken proactive steps to ensure that human rights issues are considered and addressed when delivering services to customers.**

Human rights are now included as a specific section for consideration as part of our Equality Impact Assessment template, and has been considered as part of the EqIAs for our Decent Homes Programme, Strategic Engagement Offer and Leasehold Service. Human rights were also considered in a staff context for our 2010 organisational restructure EqIA.

In partnership with [LBTH](#), the [British Institute for Human Rights](#) and [Praxis](#), THH participated in a **national pathfinder project for clients with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)**. Outcomes of this project included a full guide for staff on NRPF, and quick-reference guides specifically for front line staff and service users. We have joined the national [No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#), hosted by [Islington Council](#) and participate in Tower Hamlets New Residents and Migrants Forum. Relevant briefings have been circulated to our staff Diversity Champions network.

As a result of our increased knowledge and confidence in the field of human rights, a positive resolution of a stage 2 complaint regarding a customer's request to install a satellite dish so that she is able to receive foreign television broadcasts resulted in THH agreeing to review and revising our **Satellite Dish Policy**. It was felt that our current policy infringed on her freedom of expression. Similarly, our **Washing Line Policy** takes a rights-based approach to policy making. A **survey of over 1000 residents found that:**

- ✓ As of February 2013 **83.9% of residents felt that they were treated fairly** in their last interaction with THH;
- ✓ For **LGB residents 97% felt they were treated fairly**;
- ✓ For **Somali residents 89% felt they were treated fairly**;
- ✓ For **Bangladeshi residents 87% felt they were treated fairly**;
- ✓ For **disabled residents 84% felt they were treated fairly**.

**Outcomes: Increased satisfaction with overall service, and greater equality**

- Inequality between White British and BME overall and Bangladeshis reduced
- Inequality between disabled and non-disabled residents has reduced
- Every age, ability and gender group is more satisfied

Characteristic	2009/10	2012/13	Trend	Difference
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White British	60%	58%	↓	-2%
BME (incl White Minority)	49%	61%	↑	12%
Bangladeshi	52%	64%	↑	12%
Somali	66%	67%	↑	1%
<b>Gender</b>				
Men	53%	58%	↑	5%
Women	52%	56%	↑	4%
<b>Disability</b>				
Disabled	57%	61%	↑	4%
Not disabled	50%	57%	↑	7%
<b>Age</b>				
25-34	53%	58%	↑	5%
35-44	47%	56%	↑	9%
45-54	51%	58%	↑	7%
55-59	60%	64%	↑	4%
60-64	59%	65%	↑	6%
65-74	55%	66%	↑	11%
75-84	60%	64%	↑	4%
<b>Religion and belief</b>				
Muslim	52%	61%	↑	9%
Christian	55%	59%	↑	4%
No religion	51%	48%	↓	-3%

Source: Monthly Satisfaction Tracker (2009-2013)

## 5. A progressive and diverse workforce

### Workforce planning

Through our [Business Plan](#) and [Diversity Strategy](#), developing a progressive and diverse workforce that's more reflective of the community has been identified as a key objective in order to achieve our overall vision. As we have identified inequality and underrepresentation, we have sought to address it and have already delivered a number of improved outcomes over the last five years.



In the last financial year, a number of objectives developed and agreed by staff, residents and the board were delivered. These include:

- ✓ **Recruiting over 40 local young apprentices**, in partnership with repairs and Decent Homes contractors;
- ✓ Provided **training for front-line staff on monitoring sexual orientation, and meeting the needs of LGBT residents**;
- ✓ **Established an LGBT Staff Network**;
- ✓ **Developed a partnership with Mind, to provide free counselling sessions with staff**;
- ✓ **Started to reduce the average salary gap in terms of ethnicity and gender.**

In September 2011, we recruited our first **Apprentices**, on a London Living Wage (see Case Study 5.1). The purpose of the scheme was to:

- ✓ **increase local employment for young people** by providing employment routes into THH for those not going on to higher education;
- ✓ **improve the diversity of the workforce** by recruiting apprentices that are reflective of THH resident profile;
- ✓ **equip local young people with the skills and knowledge** to work effectively and thrive in a workplace environment.

We offered a 12 month fixed term contract and access to an NVQ Level 3 qualification to each apprentice. At the end of the scheme, the apprentices gained transferable skills, knowledge and experiences that helped them improve their employment opportunities. Also:

- ✓ **50% of the apprentices were women**;
- ✓ **All went on to secure employment** either at THH or through other organisations.

## A more representative workforce

Having recognised the under-representation of women, BME and disabled workers within the organisation compared to the make-up of the local labour market, positive action is now at the core of our approach.

Key progress headlines include:

- ✓ **57% of our staff are Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)**, compared to 52% in 2008. A higher proportion of employees have joined the organisation than have left since July 2008, and we have established a sustainable successful approach;
- ✓ **Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees are now well represented at all grades;**
- ✓ **The percentage of Muslim staff has increased from 13% in 2008, to 17% currently.** A greater proportion of starters are Muslims compared to leavers;
- ✓ **A more diverse range of age groups** are represented within the organisation.



Innovative positive action approaches we have taken include:

- ✓ Improving our recruitment process for disabled internal and external applicants - securing the **Disability Two Ticks Accreditation** and outlining our commitment to supporting disabled people into work;
- ✓ Utilising **diversity job boards**, including Stonewall's [Proud Employers](#) site for LGB job seekers. Our efforts to be a more inclusive employer have already started to deliver. Between 2011 and 2012, our percentage of applications from LGB jobseekers doubled - from 2% to 4% of all applications;
- ✓ Working with the [Tower Project](#), in 2012/13 we provided a **work placement for job seeker with learning disabilities**, to provide them with experience, whilst combating stigma amongst the wider workforce;
- ✓ Using **positive and inclusive images** in job adverts, to demonstrate the potential for women and BME job seekers to undertake manual work, encouraging applications.
- ✓ Launched our "**Stepping Up**" **talent development programme**", targeted at BME and women staff. This included ILM-certified courses, work shadowing, project management opportunities and coaching from senior managers. **93% of all participants were women or BME, surpassing an organisational target of 40%.**
- ✓ In partnership with LBTH, we have used [SkillsMatch](#) placements to provide experience and employment to several recent graduates. In 2009, SkillsMatch was awarded its second National Training Award;
- ✓ Between 2008-2010, THH made use of the **Future Jobs Fund** to employ and train five young residents. The five gained an NVQ in resident engagement and benefitted from supervision, training and support.

In line with our **Community Regeneration Plan**, we've also worked with our residents to promote their employability prospects, with THH and other local employers:

- ✓ We've provided **English courses** to resident job seekers who do not speak English as a first language. Fifteen BME men and ten BME women benefited from this in 2010/11.
- ✓ In 2013, seven THH residents successfully completed a **child-minding course** in partnership with the Limehouse Project. Many students who qualified are mothers themselves and have experienced the many barriers to finding work, including finding childcare. Each student was encouraged to develop skills she already had as a parent to progress their skills and knowledge. By providing childcare in the local area, these newly qualified residents will allow other parents who might have struggled with childcare arrangements to find work.
- ✓ Run by Timebank, the Engage Project aims to **up skill young local job seekers** (16-21 years old) to improve their chances of gaining employment. THH staff provide mentoring support, as well as opportunities for work shadowing.

## Workforce monitoring

**We hold 100% of equality data for all staff in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. Our recruitment systems have been updated in order to monitor all protected characteristics required by the Equality Act. We annually review and set workforce targets as part of our Business Plan and Diversity Strategy.**

In autumn 2010, a comprehensive [workforce profile](#) analysis took place and identified the following trends:

- Women were under-represented when compared to the tenant profile, especially in senior management and caretaking. A greater proportion of women had left the organisation than have joined;
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) colleagues and job seekers are under-represented amongst senior positions, and in manual roles;
- Disabled people were under-represented compared to the tenant profile.



**We routinely monitor the organisation as a whole, as well as at service level to help recruiting managers identify under-representation in their own service. We positively welcome applications from under-represented groups, depending on service level under-representation. For example:**

- ✓ A recent housing advisor recruitment campaign **positively encouraged applications from Bengali speakers;**
- ✓ For recent **caretaking vacancies**, we advertised the vacancy through local Somali community organisations, and used word of mouth through key Somali community activists. This was in addition to advertising the jobs on our website and in local newspapers. As a result we recruited Abdi (pictured) our **first ever Somali full-time member of staff;**
- ✓ An analysis of **applications to all vacancies in the first 6 months of 2013 showed that the majority of applications were from women (53%).**

## **Equality Analysis of HR policies and procedures**

**Full Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out on the People Strategy (May 2009) and Organisational Restructure (March 2011). Actions have been developed and agreed in consultation with staff and trade unions to mitigate adverse impact and promote improved equality outcomes for staff.**

**[EqIAs and actions are published online](#), as is workforce data in accordance with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) introduced by the Equality Act.**

As a result of the Equality Impact Assessment into the last organisation wide-restructure in 2010:

- ✓ THH has become a member of the **Mindful Employer initiative**, a charter that is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for staff;
- ✓ Introduced **training opportunities specifically for BME and women staff**;
- ✓ Enforced a **policy of ethnic and gender representation on interview panels**, in order to mitigate unconscious bias and build confidence in recruitment processes.

## **Staff engagement**

**Staff are engaged positively in service transformation and in developing new roles and ways of working.**

THH's **Staff Forum** represents every part of the organisation and has been involved in service transformation, including consultation on restructures. Analysis has recognised in the past that the forum under represented disabled and LGB workers, and as such applications from these colleagues has been encouraged. Women and BME colleagues are encouraged to participate as a development opportunity.

**Staff surveys** have been regularly carried out, with the 2012 survey being the most comprehensive so far and **monitoring every question by all nine protected characteristics**. Between 2010 and 2012:

- ✓ The number of **staff who believe that they have the opportunity to develop** has increased from 47% to 59%;
- ✓ The number of **staff who believe their line manager acknowledges a job well done** increased from 67% to 75%;

## **Promoting a positive working environment**

**Based on the 2012 staff survey, 70% of staff believe that THH respects different working styles, cultures and backgrounds. Amongst Bangladeshi staff this figure was 74%.**

THH promotes a work life balance for employees and actively promotes flexible working. All office based members of staff are able to work from home and remotely from all of our offices across the borough, subject to service demands.

Through our **Mindful Employer accreditation**, training **Mental Health First Aiders** and establishing a **counselling partnership with Mind**, we have raised awareness of mental health in the workplace and meet the needs of staff (see Case Study 5.2). A number of **Health and Wellbeing** Days have also taken place.

In 2011, we joined **Stonewall Diversity Champion Network** to embed and share best practice with other organisations and be more inclusive, accessible and fair for LGB staff. We have also entered a submission into the **Stonewall "Starting Out" recruitment guide**. Our Diversity Strategy contains the milestone of being in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Top 100. This year, we rose up the "league" by 160 places, to be 161<sup>st</sup> nationally (out of 376 entries), meaning that **we are the third most LGBT-friendly housing organisation in London**.

## **Equal pay review**

**Our first Equal Pay Analysis was carried out in January 2011. As THH pays its staff according to national pay scales the scope for illegal inequality is mitigated. However, we have identified inequality in terms of average salaries for six equality strands, and using this measure inequality was in particular concerning gender and ethnicity. Measures introduced to mitigate this inequality are starting to deliver improvements, and is monitored through our Diversity Scorecard (see Case Study 2.2). For example:**

- ✓ Our award-winning [Community Language Honorarium](#) is helping to reduce the average salary difference between White British and BME staff. (see Case Study 4.3)
- ✓ We have signed up to the Government's **Think, Act, Report** to promote gender equality in our work place. This analysis will also help us to deliver our corporate priorities as identified in our [Business Plan and Diversity Strategy](#);
- ✓ In early 2013, THH was accredited as a **London Living Wage** employer. We have been paying the London Living Wage for a number of years, but this accreditation reflects our on-going commitment and inclusion of all agency staff.

## **Harassment and bullying**

**Grievances and disciplinaries have been monitored regularly by senior management.**

THH has a **Bullying and Harassment Policy** and a **Dignity at Work Statement of Principles**. A **potentially violent person alert** on our housing management system protects staff from health and safety risks when interacting with potentially abusive customers, and from third party harassment as outlined by the Equality Act.

The Disciplinary Procedure, Grievance and Fair Treatment Procedure and Staff Code of Conduct outline a clear approach to how we deal with bullying and harassment in the workplace. In May 2011, HR developed a tracker for casework, which includes the capacity to monitor bullying and harassment casework more thoroughly.

Grievances and disciplinaries are regularly reported on at various governance levels of Tower Hamlets Homes, including Board, Performance Management Committee and Organisation Development Committee. Monthly Management Information reports will include a more

thorough analysis on bullying and harassment cases for this financial year, for the attention of the Strategic Management Team.

## Appraisals

**Equality implications inform the setting of objectives in management and individual appraisals and managers and staff are delivering improvements based on agreed objectives.**

Every member of staff has an appraisal and performance plan. HR monitor performance corporately, and all members of the Staff Forum, LGBT Staff Forum and Diversity Champions have this role acknowledged. A sampling exercise in September 2010 showed that almost all had a target that was flagged as contributing to the organisation's equality and diversity aims.

## Learning and development

**THH has delivered a range of learning and development opportunities to support the board, leadership, staff and resident groups to deliver equality outcomes. Services are provided by staff who are equipped to meet the diverse needs of customers.**

The **staff induction** outlines THH's high level commitment to equality and diversity. In-house training has been developed to meet the needs of our customers and staff concerning domestic violence, diversity, customer care, safeguarding adults and safeguarding children. An **Equality Act 2010 briefing** has been circulated to managers and board members.

By using range of training methods:

- ✓ Over 95% of office based staff have undertaken **Learning about Diversity**, an e-learning course, and 105 caretakers have undertaken a tailored **Equality and Diversity Theatre exercise**, to explore and rehearse diversity and vulnerability situations amongst residents;
- ✓ 94.1% of staff have undertaken a vulnerability e-learning course on **Safeguarding Adults**, and 250 staff attended vulnerability awareness sessions run between January and April 2010;
- ✓ 182 staff have completed **Safeguarding Children** training through an e-learning toolkit; 280 staff have completed an e-learning package on customer access;
- ✓ In 2010, **Diversity Roadshows** were attended by 192 staff, have featured 'Elsie and Meena', two resident characters who we used to discuss the practical delivery of diversity and vulnerability goals – we used these characters to 'brand' diversity work throughout the organisation to build visibility and recognition of the issues;

Equalities specific training has been provided to a range of front-line staff in relation to domestic violence, hoarding, sexual orientation, mental health and human rights. In 2011/12 we included all line-managers on a **Coaching Programme**, with a number also completing an **ILM certification in Coaching to Perform**. The objective of this was to help develop the performance of all staff.

## Next steps

In the last five years, we have delivered a range of positive equality outcomes for residents and staff, increasingly making services more accessible, inclusive and fair. Using the Equality Framework as a guide has assisted us to increasingly meet this commitment in a structured and measurable way.

However, as identified by our Diversity Strategy 2012-14, we acknowledge that further progress is required to be made over the next 12 months in order to ensure that our services are increasingly accessible, inclusive and fair for all of our customers and staff. Some of the key challenges which we have embedded in strategic plans for the coming year are:



### Knowing our customers

- Work with partners to collect and share profile information relating to all protected characteristics, and providing innovative ways to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation

### Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

- Work more closely with our contractors to deliver shared equality objectives, whilst improving performance and satisfaction for all community groups;
- Continuing to develop partnerships that address financial exclusion, and mitigate the impact of welfare reform.

### Customer engagement and satisfaction

- Continue to engage with less satisfied groups, including East European migrants and LGBT residents.

### Responsive services, access and customer care

- Improve processes to ensure that more residents believe that hate crime and domestic abuse are being dealt with effectively;
- Increase the sophistication of analysis and segmentation to increase satisfaction across all customer groups.

### A progressive and diverse workforce

- More consistently implement positive action to ensure the workforce increasingly reflects the community, and provide increased opportunities for staff to develop and progress, particularly for BME staff and women;
- Work to increase levels of staff satisfaction and engagement with service design.

Our organisational purpose is to become the best housing provider in Tower Hamlets by 2014. Achieving excellence in the areas of equality and diversity are widely acknowledged as being fundamental to this aim. Based on what we have assessed to be a solid and effective foundation, we are committed to continuing our journey of improvement and will strive to do so in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations operating in Tower Hamlets and also with our customers and staff.

## Accessibility

This is a report by Tower Hamlets Homes. If you need help to understand it or if you have any questions, please contact us by phone or email or visit one of our offices. We can also provide accessible options that meet your needs including Large Print, audio or electronic formats, and we can provide written information in another language. We can also offer a meeting with a member of staff and an interpreter.

Waa farriin ka socota shirkadda guriga iska leh ee Tower Hamlets Homes. Haddii aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo inaad fahamtid ama su'aalo qabtid fadlan naga soo wac telefoonka, ama iimayl soo dir, haddii kalena booqo mid ka mid ah xafiisyadeenna. Haddii aad codsatid waxaa laga caawin doonaa fahamka sida iyadoo qoraallada lagugu siinayo far waaweyn iyo qoraallo ku diyaarsan luqaddaada. Waxa kaloon kuu diyaarin kamaa kulan aad la yeelatid xubin ka tirsan shaqaalaha iyo turjumaan.

এটা আপনার ল্যান্ডলর্ড টাওয়ার হ্যামলেটস্ হোমস্'এর কাছ থেকে একটি মেসেজ বা বার্তা। আপনার যদি এটা বোঝার ব্যাপারে সাহায্য দরকার হয় অথবা আপনার কোন কিছু জানার থাকে, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে টেলিফোন বা ইমেইলে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন অথবা আমাদের কোন একটি অফিসে আসুন। আপনার যে ফরম্যাট সুবিধা, অনুরোধ জানালে সেরকম কোন কিছুতে তার ব্যবস্থা আমরা করতে পারবো, যার মধ্যে বড় অক্ষর ও আপনার ভাষায় লিখিত কপি থাকবে। আমরা একজন স্টাফ এবং ইন্টারপ্রিটারের সাথে আপনার ইন্টারভিউ'এর (সাক্ষাৎকার) ব্যবস্থাও করতে পারি।

هذه هي رسالة من صاحبة العقار مؤسسة تاور هاملتس هومز. إذا أنت بحاجة إلى مساعدة لفهم محتوى هذه الرسالة، أو كان لديك استفسار حولها فيرجى الاتصال بواسطة الهاتف أو بواسطة البريد الإلكتروني أو بزيارة مكتبنا. ويمكننا عند الطلب تزويدك بنسخة منها بشكل مناسب لك أي تفهمها، بما في ذلك تقديمها مطبوعة بحروف كبيرة أو مترجمة إلى لغتك الأم. كما يمكننا عرض مقابلة مع أحد موظفينا بحضور مترجم.

這是你的業主塔橋房屋發給你的信息。如果你需要協助以了解其內容或如有任何疑問，請致電、發電子郵件，或親臨我們其中一個辦事處與我們聯絡。我們可以應要求以適合你的需要的通訊形式提供資料，包括大字體版，及提供中文譯本。我們亦可以為你安排在傳譯員協助下與一位職員會面。