

2013

Residents look back at the past year



MAYOR OF
TOWER HAMLETS

**Tower
Hamlets
Homes**





Annual Report Residents' Group

Back (l-r) Lisa Sykes - Business Development, Joan Burton, Peter Sunderland, Martin Harrington, Lesley Owen - Business Development.

Front (l-r) Sarah Beydoun, Sybil Yates, Rassel Miah - Strategic Engagement, Maureen Wiseman.

Special thanks to all residents who took part in this report for your support, enthusiasm and giving up your time to get involved.

Welcome to Tower Hamlets Homes Annual Report 2013 introduced by Pam



I'm Pam Haluwa, Chair of the Residents' Panel. I hope most of you have heard about the Panel, but in case you haven't, we are a group of local residents who want to be involved and have a say on the services we receive from Tower Hamlets Homes. Each Panel member gives his or her time free. It is a lot of hard work - but it can be very rewarding.

The Panel has a role in scrutinising the services THH offers. This year, we looked at the Resident Engagement and Estate Inspection services. We talked to 100 residents and surveyed almost 1,900 more. Our report, and the recommendations we made, can be found on the THH website.

The Panel is keen to see THH develop an approach to engagement that embraces all sections of the community and is genuinely resident-led. So it seemed entirely appropriate that this year residents were asked to present the Annual Report. It's our chance to reflect on what happened in the year.

Sixteen residents were involved in making this report. The residents got together in their own time to discuss what should go in the report and how it should look and feel. You may have noticed that we have changed the annual report from a financial year (April-March) to a calendar year (January-December) making the review more easy to understand.

I'd like to thank every one who helped put this report together – staff and residents. Your hard work and enthusiasm has made it relevant, interesting and real – and our best yet. A big thank you to THH who had the courage and insight to allow it to be resident-led.

I hope you enjoy this report and I look forward to hearing your feedback. Please get in touch with me on 020 7364 5015 if you have any comments or want to know more about the Residents' Panel.



Performance tables in this report

This symbol marks the performance results chosen by the Residents' Panel.

'Residents rating' and 'residents satisfied' results are generated from telephone surveys of THH residents by Kwest Research Ltd, THHs independent market research partners.

Clean and green neighbourhoods by Sarah

I'm Sarah. I'm a THH resident and passionate about environmental regeneration and the green spaces around where I live. Like many residents, I was unhappy with the performance of the Grounds Maintenance contractor this year. The communal grass was left to look very untidy on a number of estates and other gardening work was not being carried out.

After talking with residents, the Council and the grounds maintenance contractor, THH agreed to bring the grounds maintenance service in-house. This means THH can respond better to our needs as they have direct control over the service. And we have a greater say in how THH manage and develop the horticulture service.



Clean and green		2011/12	2012/13	2013	
		Result	Result	Target	Result
★ Residents rating the caretaking service as good or excellent	Excellent/good				1,191
	Responses				1,646
	%	60%	66%	70%	72%
Residents rating the gardening service as good or excellent	Excellent/good				1,189
	Responses				1,594
	%	63%	69%	70%	75%

I enjoy recycling and finding new uses for things people no longer want. In my neighbourhood, we have transformed three unused community spaces into three much loved community food gardens. And with the help and support from THH, we have transformed a fifth space into a Family Area – a safe environment for children to play and grow up in.

Our environmental improvements have encouraged more people to visit these areas, and spend longer engaging with each other every time they visit. Environmental regeneration is not just about food gardens and family areas, we recycle and reuse just about everything that's around us! You can see some of the things we have recycled at the bottom of this page.



By enriching our neighbourhoods, we also enrich our lives. This year, THH helped us to build our first insect hotel at Matilda House in Wapping, create our first wild flower garden at Digby Greenways in Bethnal Green, and put up 64 bird boxes across 27 neighbourhoods.

Our caretaking team leaders took 'mobile working' to a new level this year after purchasing four new cycles. The bicycles offer a low carbon, low cost, healthier way to get around our Neighbourhoods. Well done guys!



Extra help when you need it *by Sybil*

Hi, I'm Sybil. I've been a resident of Tower Hamlets for over 40 years. More than one in three residents, like me, is over 60, and this group is growing all the time. So we need to think carefully about how we can meet their needs.

THH set up an ageing inquiry to look at some of the issues older people face. The Inquiry spoke to over 300 older residents and experts working in the borough. They produced a report 'Homes for Life', which outlines what they found and what they are going to do next.

THH has also made a film that looks at the work they have done and talks to older residents about their experiences. You can find the report and the film on the THH website.



People over 65 spend
80%
of their time in their home



Getting older is not a problem. However, the way we support our ageing population is.

Cllr Rabina Khan

File In The Fridge

Last year, I said that I'd like to see an Older Person's Ambassador to champion older people's rights – something I've spent a long time campaigning for. So I was pleased when THH set up an Older People's Champions group in 2013.

As a member of the group, I suggested introducing 'File In The Fridge', an emergency information scheme designed to encourage older and vulnerable residents to keep their medical details on a form in a plastic pot, in the fridge. It alerts the emergency services to their medical and contact details should an accident or sudden illness happen in their home. The scheme is a potential lifesaver. I was thrilled when THH said they loved the idea and will start rolling it out to residents.



We've helped over
30
older and vulnerable residents clear their overgrown gardens

Involving you by Gabrielle, Yasmin, Rubena & Monwar, Youth Ambassadors

Youth Ambassadors act as role models for young residents in our neighbourhoods and help us to solve local issues.



Hi, we're Yasmin and Rubena. Like many residents, we sometimes find it hard to get hold of the right person when we contact Tower Hamlets Homes. THH has improved the service provided by the Housing Service Centre (the people we speak to when we call THH on 020 7364 5015). They now deal with most general enquiries like taking a rent payment or arranging a car parking permit. All calls to the Housing Service Centre are tracked, which means that if you or I need to call them back about something, they will have a record of the enquiry, and who is dealing with it.



We handled
231,418
telephone calls

Involving you		2011/12	2012/13	2013	
		Result	Result	Target	Result
★ Residents rating THH at keeping residents informed	Excellent/good				1,408
	Responses				1,931
	%	67%	74%	70%	73%
★ Residents rating THH at taking residents' views into account	Excellent/good				974
	Responses				1,796
	%	42%	52%	50%	54%
Residents rating THH at providing opportunities to get involved	Excellent/good				911
	Responses				1,346
	%	73%	66%	68%	68%



I'm Monwar. In September, residents began working with THH Repairs Inspectors checking the quality of empty homes to let. This gives residents the opportunity to get involved and see first-hand the type of work THH does and the challenges it faces turning empty homes into places you and I will be happy to live.



I'm Gabrielle. The Residents' Panel looked at Resident Engagement and Estate Inspection services this year. They visited Brent Housing Partnership to compare best practice. I think the Panel inspections are a great way for residents to have a say about the services THH provides. Two Youth Ambassadors sit on the Panel, which means the views of younger residents, like me, also are heard.

Maintaining your home by Peter & Fahima



I'm Peter. I've lived in a THH home for over 6 years. Repairs is an important issue for me and for many other THH residents. We all want our repairs done quickly and to a good standard every time, so it's vital we work with THH to get the service we want and deserve.

There are many ways to get involved and have your say from the Service Improvement Groups (I'm a member), and phone surveys to Tenants' & Residents' Associations and complaints. So what are you waiting for? Pick up the phone. Get involved and have your say!



We spent over
£21m
on repairs



Repairs		2011/12	2012/13	2013	
		Result	Result	Target	Result
★ Repairs completed in target	In target				67,069
	Completed				70,118
	%	91%	96%	98%	96%
★ Repair appointments kept	Kept				29,858
	Made				30,513
	%	93%	98%	95%	98%
Residents rating the repairs service as excellent or good	Excellent/good				3,062
	Responses				3,722
	%	82%	83%	84%	82%



The Repairs Help Centre handled
97,144
repairs calls



Residents said they wanted the repairs service to be more transparent. So, Mears, THH main repairs contractor, now takes before and after pictures of repair jobs. The pictures are kept on file and can be used to help sort out any complaints residents may have about repairs, including when the work was done. If you are a leaseholder, the pictures can help you sort out any issues you have with leasehold billing.

I'm Fahima, I'm a THH resident. Like Peter, repairs is an important issue for me. Although I'm responsible for most of the repairs in my home, I report communal repairs to THH. I've always found it frustrating not to be able to make an appointment for communal repairs because it's difficult to know when the work will get done.

After talking to residents, THH agreed to extend appointments to cover communal repairs. Mears, THH main repairs contractor, will give you a courtesy call when they arrive at the job, and – as long as they can complete the work the same day – a courtesy call before they leave.



We did a lot in 2013.
Here's some of the
achievements we're
proud of.



72%
of residents rated
the caretaking
service as either
excellent or good.



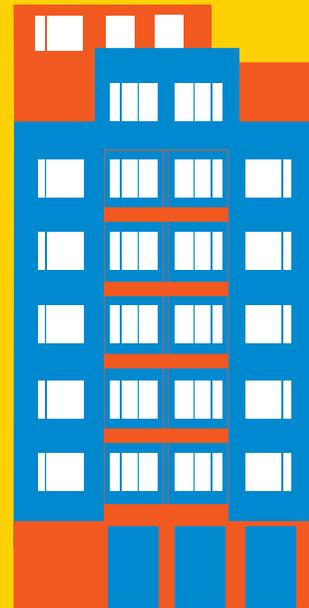
3.09%
current tenant arrears as a percentage
of the annual rent due. In the borough,
this is one the best performances.



2465
palladin bins
were cleaned and
disinfected and
1142 waste chutes
were jet washed
with hot water.



63
community events
held across our
neighbourhoods.



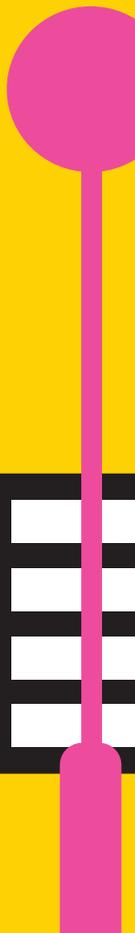
1764
estate parking applications
were made online using our
new parking map.



1020
homes made decent
as part of the Decent
Homes programme.



Our nur



year in members



1

First housing organisation in London to achieve 'Excellent' rating in Social Housing Equality Framework.



**DIRECT
Debit**

1722

Leaseholders pay service charges by Direct Debit.



100%

of tenants' homes with valid gas safety certificate.



70,118

repairs completed.



3

new community food gardens.

Improving services in neighbourhoods

Our LGBTeTea drop-in sessions were advertised across all neighbourhoods to help us improve housing services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender residents in Tower Hamlets. They were specifically launched to improve community cohesion in the borough, in response to hate crime.

In 2011, LGBT residents were 10% less likely to be satisfied with opportunities to get involved than straight residents. In 2013*, LGBT residents were more satisfied with communication, and fairness of delivery of housing services compared to residents overall.

* As at August 2013



Your neighbourhood by Martin



I'm Martin. I'm a THH resident and I've been involved in youth work for many years in Tower Hamlets. I was really pleased to see THH set up the Bling My Hood project, which encourages young people to carry out improvements to their neighbourhood and gives them a sense of ownership and pride in where they live. Three out of four areas where the project took place (Malmesbury, Royal Mint and Avebury) have seen a marked reduction in youth related ASB. Reducing ASB is not always about enforcement. It's also about redirecting younger people's energy towards positive things in life and giving them links back into the community - which brings better results for everyone.



It's not all good news though. Many residents have said that when they report anti-social behaviour they don't feel THH keeps them informed about their case. Some residents are not clear what is ASB or who to call when they experience it. I'd like to see THH develop a strategy that helps residents be clearer about the different types of ASB, when they should call THH and when they should call the Police on 101 or 999.

Neighbourhood		2012/13		2013	
		Result	Target	Result	
★ Residents satisfied with the handling of anti-social behaviour complaints	Satisfied			115	
	Responses			213	
	%	46%	70%	54%	
★ Residents satisfied with the outcome of anti-social behaviour complaints	Satisfied			107	
	Responses			211	
	%	47%	60%	51%	



10

My dad's car, Niaz, resident, 10 years old

THH introduced a new estate parking system this year, helping residents to apply online for a car space or garage. I don't drive, but other residents tell me the new system is far easier to use. It has reduced the waiting list by half and has helped THH save money. I'd like to see THH come up with more initiatives like these.



1764
applications made
online for
estate parking

Last year, the Residents' Panel scrutinised our ASB service and made 58 recommendations to improve the service. We've completed 36. Here's how we're doing with the rest:

- 11** in progress
- 9** are longer term initiatives
- 2** not supported by the Board



Rents and Service Charges by Rob & Mike



Hi, I'm Rob. This year, the government introduced major changes to Housing Benefit, which affected hundreds of THH residents. THH Welfare Reform Team worked hard to prepare residents for the changes. They sent an initial letter and a leaflet to every resident at risk. They also visited residents at home, set up one-to-one sessions and ran weekly advice surgeries at local housing offices.

THH has helped more than 700 residents through the changes introduced by the government. Over 200 residents have been put in contact with partner agencies to help with the impact of the reforms. Now that the changes are here, it's good to see that residents can get the support they need, when they need it, to help them through these difficult times.

I'm Mike. Over 200 leaseholders, who were finding it difficult to pay their service charges as a result of extreme financial difficulties, have been helped and supported by THH Leasehold Financial Inclusion team. THH has also set up weekly surgeries so that leaseholders can get one-to-one advice and support on major works and service charge bills.



Paying for services		2011/12 Result	2012/13 Result	Target	2013 Result
★ Amount of service charge collected	Collected	£12.98m	£11.92m	£12.10m	£11.76m
					£76.09m
★ Rent collected as % of rent due	Due				£76.15m
	%	99.61%	99.71%	98.0%	99.92%

Collecting rent and service charges is an important part of what THH does. They use the rent and service charges they collect to re-invest and improve the services we receive.



11

Many THH residents have been affected by the changes to housing benefits introduced by the government in April. We have been working with our partners to look at ways of supporting residents through the major changes to the Welfare system, and providing information and advice on all the options available to them.

Aman Berhanu,
THH Welfare Reform Team



Over
1,100
residents are affected by
non-dependent deductions

Value for money by Asli

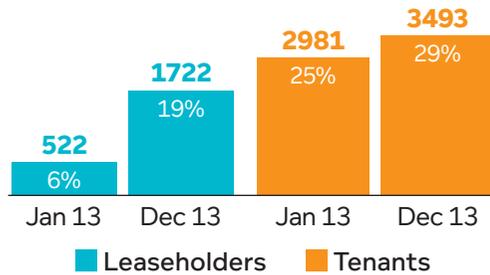
Hi, I'm Asli. Like every tenant, I received a new rent payment card in February. The cards are part of a new contract with AllPay that provides better value for money for the cost of collecting rent from me and 16,000 other rent payers!

By teaming up with the Council's Homeless Service, Benefits Service and Council Tax Service to get one big contract - a bit like bulk buying - THH has reduced its costs significantly. And that's good news for every tenant!

Direct Debit

Paying your rent or service charges by direct debit helps to keep costs down. THH runs regular cash prize draws to encourage residents to switch their rent or service charge payments to Direct Debit (see the THH website for details).

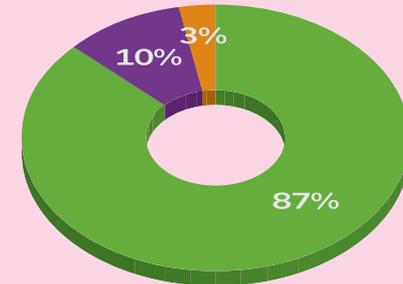
This year, there has been a big rise in the number of residents who choose to pay rent or service charges by Direct Debit.



Smart Meters

THH has started a programme to replace its communal electricity meters with Smart meters. So far they have installed 343 Smart meters. They plan to fit Smart meters to all blocks by 2020.

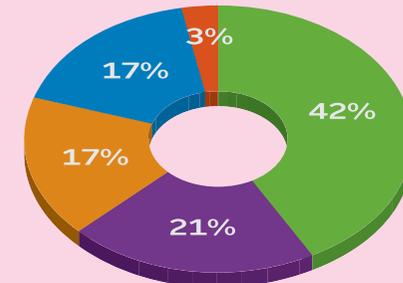
Where does our money come from?



Almost all of the money we spend on managing and maintaining your home and neighbourhood comes from residents' rent and service charges.

- Rent and service charges - tenants
- Service charges - leaseholders
- Estate parking and storage shed rent

How is our money spent?



The biggest amount goes to repairing homes. The smallest amount goes to rent collection.

- Repairs
- Operating costs e.g salaries, telephones
- Lighting, heating and water rates
- Estate services
- Rent collection

Investing in your home and community *by Marian*

Decent Homes

THH is in the middle of a 181 million pound Decent Homes programme. Over 1,000 tenanted homes were made decent this year. A programme this size was always going to be challenging, especially as fitting new kitchens and bathrooms can be very disruptive for residents.

THH hasn't always got things right, but they do acknowledge when things don't always go as planned. When they worked in my home, I experienced delays between different parts of the work, and some parts over ran. It was difficult at times to get information on what was happening.

When I complained, THH and the Decent Homes contractors, did work extremely hard to put things right. I'm more than happy with the quality of the work and my lovely, new kitchen – but relieved the work is finally finished!

Jobs for local people

THH Decent Homes contractors have employed over 100 local people and recruited over 50 apprentices. All the apprentices live in the borough and many are THH residents. This is a great opportunity for local people to gain experience and qualifications, especially the youngsters. Let's hope there are many more opportunities for local people in 2014!



Message from the Chief Executive



I'm Gavin. I'm Tower Hamlets Homes Chief Executive. This is my fourth Annual Report. When I was asked what I thought about a resident-led annual report my immediate thought was – ok how is that going to work? After giving it some thought I realised actually it could work very well!

Tower Hamlets Homes really values residents' feedback and involvement. It's your comments that help shape our services. We are always coming up with ways for residents to get involved and have their say about the services they receive from us.

And where better to feature what residents think about the service we provide than in the round up of what we have achieved this year and what we look to do better next year.

Everyone who appears in this report is a resident of Tower Hamlets Homes. Thank you everyone for making this such a success and making it yours.

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report.

Gavin Cansfield

Our National Awards - 2013



In October, we were finalists in the Women in Housing Awards, Best Project and Innovation category for our Somali Tenants' Engagement Project. The awards celebrate and recognise the achievements of women working in the housing sector across the UK.



In October, we were shortlisted for the National Leasehold Conference 2013 Innovation in Home Ownership Management Award for our financial inclusion work with residents experiencing extreme financial difficulties.



In July, the Local Government Association accredited THH at the "Excellent" level of the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) - the first housing provider in London to achieve this level of excellence.



In July, we were named winners of the TPAS National Excellence in Equality and Diversity award for our 'We Speak Your Language' project, helping residents who don't speak English access our services. We were also national finalists in the Excellence in the Community category for our 'Multi-Faith' project. TPAS is the leading national tenant participation organisation working to promote tenant empowerment.

How we compare to other housing providers in Tower Hamlets



The Council works with all social housing providers in the borough through the Tower Hamlets Housing Forum (THHF). This stamp marks the THHF local offer – the standards of service for all tenants. The information set out below shows how our performance compares with other housing providers between April - September 2012 and April - September 2013.

Average time to re-let empty homes (days)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Eastend Homes	16.90	1	
Swan Housing Association	17.80	2	
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	18.20	3	
Tower Hamlets Homes	19.94	4 ▼	3
Poplar HARCA	22.00	5	
Gateway Housing Association	28.00	6	

Non-emergency repairs completed in target time (%)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Poplar HARCA	98.10	1	
Swan Housing Association	98.00	2	
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	98.00	3	
Eastend Homes	96.01	4	
Tower Hamlets Homes	95.49	5 ◀▶	5
Gateway Housing Association	87.89	6	

Satisfaction with repair (%)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100	1	
Tower Hamlets Homes	94.00	2 ▲	4
Eastend Homes	93.27	3	
Poplar HARCA	93.00	4	
Gateway Housing Association	86.52	5	
Swan Housing Association	75.50	6	

Repair appointments kept (%)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	100	1	
Tower Hamlets Homes	98.16	2 ◀▶	2
Swan Housing Association	97.32	3	
Poplar HARCA	97.10	4	
Eastend Homes	96.96	5	
Gateway Housing Association	91.64	6	

Rent collected as proportion of rent due (%)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Eastend Homes	103.44	1	
Tower Hamlets Community Housing	101.40	2	
Tower Hamlets Homes	100.44	3 ▲	6
Gateway Housing Association	100.18	4	
Swan Housing Association	96.50	5	

Resident satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint (%)	2013 Result	Position	
		2013	2012
Eastend Homes	84.21	1	
Swan Housing Association	80.00	2	
Gateway Housing Association	50.00	3	
Tower Hamlets Homes	42.11	4 ▲	5



How to contact Tower Hamlets Homes



Website

www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk



Facebook

www.facebook.com/towerhamletshomes



Twitter

Follow us @THHomes



Phone

020 7364 5015



Email

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Write to us

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Translations and Accessibility

If you would like this in large print, audio or your community language visit your local Housing Office or contact us via phone or email.

Bengali

আপনি যদি এটি বড় বড় অক্ষরে, অডিও'তে বা আপনার কমিউনিটির ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে আপনার নেইবারহুড হাউজিং অফিসে চলে আসুন অথবা আমাদের সাথে টেলিফোনে বা ইমেইলে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Somali

Haddaad dooneyso in warkan lagu soo qoro qoraal waawayn, hab maqal ah ama luqadda jaaliyadaadu ku hadasho booqo Xafiiska Guriyaynta Jiiraanka ee ku yaalla xaafaddaada ama kula soo xiriir xafiiskeenna hab telefoon ama email.

