

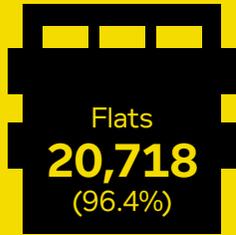


# About us at a glance

We are a not-for-profit company set up to deliver high quality housing services for residents living in 21,000 Tower Hamlets Council homes.

# 21,495

number of homes we manage



## Number of tenants and leaseholders



Tenure	No.	%
Tenanted	11,947	56
Leasehold	9,548	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,495</b>	<b>100</b>



Homes available to let in 2015/16



Average time to relet empty homes during 2015/16



Number of new homes built



Size	Tenanted homes		Average weekly rent	
	No.	%	Tower Hamlets Council	Private sector in TH
Bedsit	769	6.44	£85.48	£322
1 bed	3,297	27.60	£99.18	£358
2 bed	4,709	39.42	£112.20	£438
3 bed	2,565	21.47	£126.12	£553
4 bed	518	4.34	£141.23	£725
5 bed	76	0.64	£157.07	*
6 bed	8	0.07	£160.70	*
7 bed	4	0.03	£166.82	*
8 bed	1	0.01	£179.33	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,947</b>	<b>100</b>		

\*market data unavailable

# Welcome



**Hello, I am Susmita Sen. I'm delighted to have joined the organisation in September 2015 and proud to lead an organisation that works alongside its residents as one team.**

This Annual Review is one of the ways of keeping you informed about what's happening with your housing services. It gives key information on how we're making a difference in your homes and neighbourhoods and what we're doing to continue to improve our services.

We've had a fantastic year working with residents but we know we haven't got everything right – we still have a lot more to do.

In 2015/16, several residents picked up prestigious awards for the work they do in our communities and I'd like to offer my congratulations to:

**Steve Russell and Helen Rahman** – winners of the TPAS Southern Region Excellence in Community Action for the Locksley and Limehouse Community Partnership

**Pam Haluwa** – TPAS Southern Regional Finalist for Excellence in Co-regulation

**Nazrul Islam** – TPAS Southern Regional Finalist for Tenant of the Year

**Margaret Wilson, Farzana Ali, Margaret Cox and Laura Buckley** – winners of UK Housing's 'outstanding approach to empowering local communities' award on behalf of all the great community food gardeners in our neighbourhoods

It's great to see so many residents being recognised at national level for the amazing work they do each and every day.

The next 12 months are going to be tough. We will be talking to residents about the changes we face and how we plan to deliver better services with less money. The government will also be announcing changes to the Housing and Planning Act. We'll keep you updated on what these changes will mean for you and how they will affect THH.

I want to thank everyone who took part in making this year's report for his or her contribution, time, and energy. THH has come a long way and we couldn't have done it without the support and commitment of our residents and partners. Together we achieve so much more.

**Susmita Sen**  
**Chief Executive, Tower Hamlets Homes**

How we performed in 2015/16

## Repairs and maintenance

We want to get repairs right first time and provide a repairs service that is easy to access. We have worked hard to improve our service but we know we have lots more to do.



**69,500**

number of repairs we completed this year



**97.3%**

repairs completed on time



**76.7%**

repairs right first time



**£16M**

spent on repairs



**89.8%**

residents satisfied with our repairs service

### What you said about the repairs service

"We need to provide better information for residents on preventing blocked sinks and condensation in the home."

### So what have we done?

We produced a two-minute video on how to prevent and tackle condensation in the home. And in 2016/17, we'll produce a second video on blocked sinks and how to avoid them.

We hope the videos will help residents prevent some types of repairs before they happen.



[www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes](http://www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes)

## Repair appointments



Did you know that the number of missed repair appointments by residents is twice that of our contractors?

**1,003**

appointments missed by **residents**

**467**

appointments missed by **contractors**

**Help us save money** – let us know if you want to cancel your appointment, we'll be happy to arrange another slot if you need to reschedule. We can give your old appointment to someone else who needs it.

## Gas safety

Residents' safety is our top priority, which is why we take pride in our gas safety record.



**100%**

tenanted homes with a valid gas safety certificate

## We're doing more to improve our repair service

In 2015/16, we didn't meet our target of 92% of residents satisfied with our repair service. We've made improvements that we hope will put that right and increase the number of jobs we get right first time.

### So what have we done?

- We now discuss repairs issues every week with Mears, our repairs contractor
- We've improved the way we handle your calls so that when we send someone to carry out a repair, we can be sure we are sending the right person who can solve the problem on the first visit
- We carry out more planned maintenance repair work, which will offset repairs and save money in the longer term

## How is THH doing compared to others?

	THH	London ALMOs	THHF*
Satisfaction with repairs	90%	91%	94%
Repairs right first time	77%	88%	-

\*THHF - Tower Hamlets Housing Forum is a partnership between housing associations and Tower Hamlets Council

How we performed in 2015/16

# Keeping communities safe

We want to make our neighbourhoods clean and safe places for everyone to live and work. Preventing and tackling ASB is a priority for us. We work closely with local residents, the police, the local council, and Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers to tackle ASB in our neighbourhoods.



**1,039**  
new ASB cases reported in 2015/16



**85%**  
ASB cases resolved



**21**  
injunctions against perpetrators



**5**  
ASBOs served



**1**  
ASB perpetrator evicted

## THH uncovers cannabis factory

We made the discovery after a resident reported the front door of an abandoned property wide open. The police found 100+ cannabis plants and cannabis growing equipment inside the flat. We're pleased to report that the police seized the equipment and destroyed the cannabis plants, making sure they never made their way onto the streets.

## How is THH doing compared to others?

	THH	London ALMOs	THHF*
Satisfaction with handling	43%	-	-
Satisfaction with outcome	41%	-	59%
Cases successfully resolved	85%	92%	-

\*THHF – Tower Hamlets Housing Forum is a partnership between housing associations and Tower Hamlets Council



#portrait of a tenant – Elizabeth



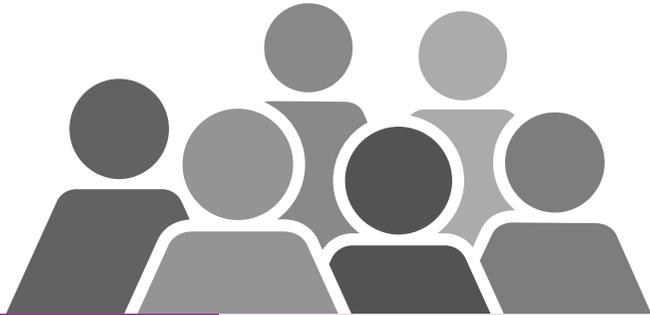
Watch the video at:

[www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes](http://www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes)

How we performed in 2015/16

# Resident Involvement

We really value residents' feedback and involvement. It's your comments on your customer experience that continues to drive our service improvement. At Tower Hamlets Homes working together with residents is hugely important to us. We involve residents from Board level right through to neighbourhood level.



<b>Our Board</b>	Leading the organisation and influencing decision-making as resident members of the Board.
<b>Residents' Panel</b>	Challenging and scrutinising our performance – and holding us to account as members of the Panel.
<b>Service Development Groups</b>	Looking closely at key services and suggesting ways to improve them as members of Service Development Groups.
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Helping us understand residents' opinions on new ideas, products or services as members of Focus Groups.
<b>TRAs</b>	Improving local neighbourhoods and influencing local decision making as members of TRAs.

**Residents' Panel member, Mahbub, explains why he got involved with the group:**

*"I wanted to be active in the community and give something back. It's given me a better idea of what THH actually delivers. I've also met people who have skills different to my own – and I've learned from them; it's also a great way to boost your confidence and try new things."*



## How everyone got involved in 2015/16

More than 11,000 residents got involved in telephone surveys. Here's how:



98

residents on their individual ASB case



3,425

residents on customer service



1,621

residents on housing management



293

residents on improving services for BME residents



5,377

residents on repairs



288

residents on improving services for residents with physical disabilities

## Service Development Groups

Our Service Development Groups (SDGs) is a forum for residents and staff to work together to discuss services and performance issues. Each group looks at a key service and suggests ways to improve them.

**In 2015/16, SDG members worked with us to:**

- Improve our leasehold service charge invoices so they're easier to understand. We made the layout clearer and simplified the wording
- Produce an information video for residents on reducing condensation in the home
- Improve our ASB incident diary, making it easier for residents to record incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Pilot different solutions to the problem of fly tipping and rubbish dumping, to see what works best

How we performed in 2015/16

# Customer service and complaints

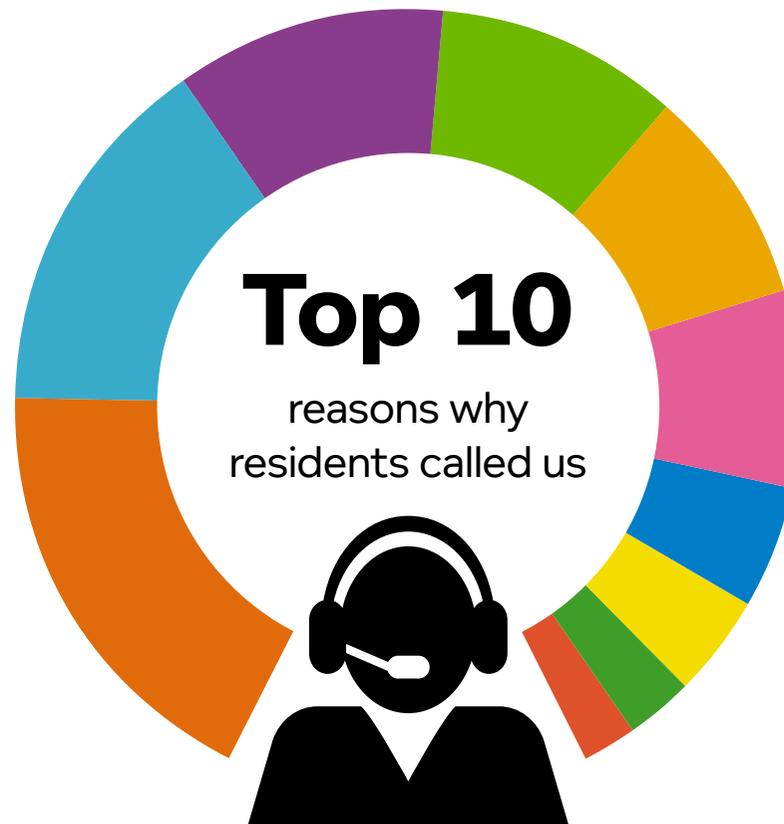
We want to make it easy for you to access our services and get the information you need – when you need it. Our team of customer service advisors don't just listen – they go the extra mile to help you sort out your query.

We take pride in delivering excellent customer services but we know it takes more than just a 'hello' and a 'smile' when we answer the phone or meet residents face-to-face. Not all customers are the same. But every customer deserves an excellent service.

In 2015/16, we received **113,713** calls at the Housing Service Centre

– that's more than 11,000 calls per month or 78 calls every hour! Here are the top 10 reasons why residents called us:

As well as the 113,713 calls we received, the council's Repairs Service Centre handled a further 94,252 calls on our behalf. **That's 207,965 calls in total!**



## Number of calls (% of total)

- Repairs **19,639** (18%)
- Leasehold **16,489** (15%)
- Tower Hamlets Council services\* **11,633** (11%)
- Parking **11,058** (10%)
- Tenancy matters **10,219** (9%)
- Rents **8,785** (8%)
- Decent Homes **5,512** (5%)
- Neighbourhoods **4,449** (4%)
- Environment **3,310** (3%)
- ASB **2,124** (2%)

\*e.g. Lettings, Housing Benefit and Council Tax

## What you said about our Housing Service Centre

# 79%

of residents rated the overall service as excellent or good

# 86%

of residents said it was easy to get their issue resolved, but our telephone options were not easy to use

### So what have we done?

We know how frustrating it can be when you call us and can't get through to the right person, so we have improved our telephone options to make it easier for you to get in touch:

- We've made our tenant and leasehold telephone options clearer
- We've created an option for Tower Hamlets Council queries – such as Council Tax, Housing Benefits and Lettings – to help reduce the 11,000 calls a year we get for these services
- We repeat our telephone options three times, making it easier for our customers to select the right option.

## Visits

More than 20,000 residents visited our front counter service at our Rushmead and Watney Market offices. Here are the top five things residents wanted to know more about:



1. Tenancy issues



2. Rent and rent arrears



3. Parking



4. Leasehold issues



5. General enquiries

## Complaints

We take your complaints seriously – as well as helping you put things right, we want to understand what went wrong to help us improve our services.

# 1,721

complaints handled

# 64%

of complaints answered within target



Here are the top three things residents complained about:

1. Delays in contractors completing works; especially Decent Homes contractors
2. Problems with communal heating systems
3. Failure to keep residents informed when there are service delays

### So what have we done?

- We now call back all complainants to make sure we understand the issue fully – this saves time and speeds up our response
- We've set up an aftercare team dedicated to sorting out your Decent Homes queries
- We carry out consultation on planned work earlier and give more residents regular information on current work

# Value for money

We kept THH on a sound financial footing throughout 2015/16 despite rents and management fee from Tower Hamlets Council reducing. We did this by doing more with less – our budget was £2M less in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15.



## Income

**£94M**

We collected £94M in income:

**£74M**

from rent and service charges from tenants

**£13M**

in service charges from leaseholders

**£2M**

other income including income from renting garages, car spaces and sheds



## Repairs and Improvements

**£68M**

We spent £68M improving our homes:

**£48M**

on Decent Homes

**£16M**

on repairs

**£4M**

on other improvements, such as wall insulation to improve the comfort and energy efficiency of your homes



## Housing Management

**£34M**

We spent £34M keeping our neighbourhoods clean and safe, dealing with anti-social behaviour and supporting residents:

**£23M**

on staff

**£5M**

on running costs

**£6M**

on Tower Hamlets Council services (This includes Service Level Agreements for things like ICT, Legal Services, Facilities Management, Payroll, Pest Control and THEOs)



## Value for Money

Throughout 2015/16, we carried out satisfaction surveys to ensure we were focusing on residents' priorities.

We also tested our costs and charges against similar organisations to check we were achieving value for money.

By doing this we kept leasehold service charges down and made the most of our resources to provide decent homes.



#portrait of a tenant – Irene



Watch the video at:

[www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes](http://www.youtube.com/towerhamletshomes)

# Supporting local communities

We work closely with our partners to support communities, so that everyone has the opportunity to live well and prosper. We went out and about across our neighbourhoods to help to create thriving communities where residents can be proud of their homes, and neighbourhoods.

We have an active community investment programme helping residents back into work and communities to thrive.

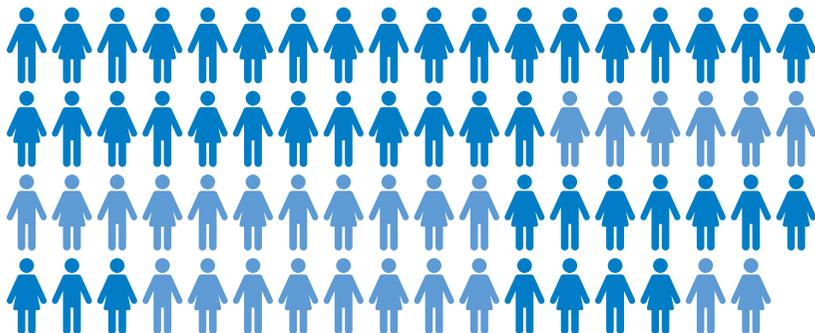


## Helping residents back into training and work

We're pleased to report that our training courses have been extremely popular with THH residents and the residents of our partner landlords.

Over the last 12 months, we've **trained 155 residents** on a range of topics, from how to use a digital camera to housing law, and food hygiene to public speaking.

We piloted a project to improve residents' employability prospects, in partnership with Ocean Regeneration Trust. More than 150 residents got involved in the pilot including:



**30** residents took part in English Language classes

**17** residents took part in skills training

**10** residents referred to local job brokerage service

**8** residents undertook IT training

**4** residents referred to accredited Childcare level 2 course

**2** residents, previously long-term unemployed, got full time jobs

## Healthy living

In 2015/16, we ran a healthy eating programme for local residents working with Stifford Centre's Health Trainers Service:

**466**

residents took part in healthy eating and physical activity sessions

**121**

residents received individual advice from Health Trainers

## Welfare Reform

In 2015/16 we:

**1,000**

advised over 1,000 tenants affected by Welfare Reform

**147**

referred 147 tenants to partner agencies

**230**

helped 230 tenants get Discretionary Housing Payments

**£76,306**

helped tenants get back £76,306 in refunds for incorrect deductions to Housing Benefit

## Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is where our business partners 'give something back' to the community. For example, we work closely with our Decent Homes contractors to make the most of job opportunities for young local people across Tower Hamlets.

In 2015/16 our Decent Homes contractors:

**125**

employed 125 local apprentices

**31%**

ensured 31% of their Decent Homes workforce live in Tower Hamlets

**15%**

ensured 15% of their Decent Homes related spending was within LBTH

## Getting to know you

'Getting to know you' is our scheme to identify residents' needs through a relaxed, one-to-one conversation about their health, disability, money worries, drug or alcohol issues, caring responsibilities – or anything else that concerns them.

Understanding our residents' needs is hugely important to us. It means we are better able to help residents access other support services that they may need.

In 2015-16 we:

**660**

carried out 660 Getting to Know You conversations

**982**

re-assessed 982 residents with a disability or access needs

**200+**

trained over 200 staff in 'safeguarding' helping them to identify and protect adults vulnerable to abuse or neglect

## Working with young people

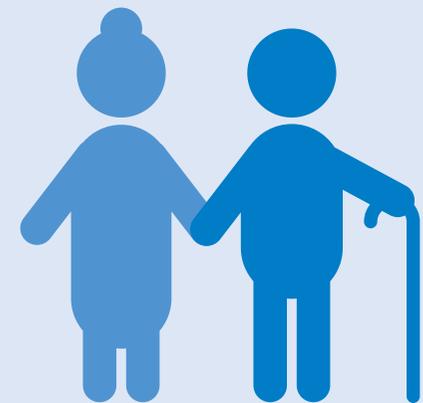
We set up a four-month youth activity project with our partners, The Rooted Forum. More than **30** local young people were involved in various youth activities.



young local people took part in boxing classes

## Looking after older residents

We're committed to reducing social isolation among older residents. We're delighted to be involved with the Forever Young Lunch Club for older residents. In 2015/16, we organised a winter event to help promote the club. The great news is now more than **40** older residents visit the Lunch Club every Saturday.



How we performed in 2015/16

# Homes and neighbourhoods to be proud of

We're delighted to be involved with Tower Hamlets Council in building much-needed social housing in the borough. We're proud to be doing our bit to help address the short-fall of affordable housing in Tower Hamlets and investing in the homes and neighbourhoods we manage.



## Building new homes

In 2015-16, we built our first ever development of new homes at Bradwell Street in Bethnal Green. Working in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council, we delivered 9 x four bedroom houses (three with disability adaptations), 3 x two bedroom flats and

a brand new Community Centre for local residents. All of the properties at Bradwell Street are let at affordable rent, supporting local people to live, work and contribute to their neighbourhoods.

Tower Hamlets Council built 40 affordable homes on the site of a former community

centre, Dame Colet House, in Stepney. The homes are now managed by Tower Hamlets Homes.

And the good news doesn't stop there. In the next 12 months, we're **planning to build another 160 new homes** for local people.

## Improving homes

As well as building 12 new homes, this year we **improved 1,027 existing homes:**



**400**

homes had new kitchens



**447**

homes had new bathrooms



**206**

homes had new boilers



**87**

homes had new central heating systems



**387**

homes had new electrics and/or a full rewire

Our Decent Homes programme comes to an end soon. In five years, we've worked on 12,000 homes and brought almost 7,500 homes up to the Decent Homes standard. Another 780 homes benefited from aids and adaptations.

## Neighbourhoods

### Green space for everyone

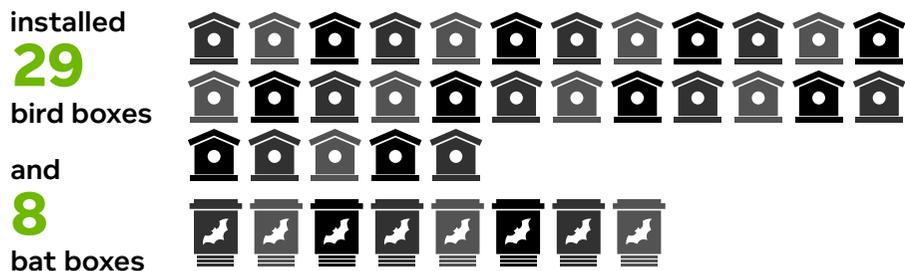
We take pride in supporting an active community food garden programme. We provide residents, with no outdoor space of their own, the opportunity to grow food and create spaces in which they and their families can enjoy.

We have created 527 growing beds, and next year we're hoping to create even more.



## Looking after nature

We're pleased to report that as well as improving communities, we're also investing in our green spaces. In 2015/16 we:



## What you said about environmental services

Our Environmental Service Development Group told us that fly tipping on THH estates was an eyesore. Over 11,000 items of dumped rubbish were collected in the year, despite Tower Hamlets Council offering a free collection service.

### So what have we done?

We produced 3 different types of promotional leaflets and posters to raise awareness of the anti-social effects and cost of dumping rubbish. The most successful campaign, which spelled out the actual cost of rubbish collection to residents, reduced rubbish dumping by 17%.

We continue to look for ways of reducing the problem including stronger action against commercial properties.

Portrait of a tenant –  
young residents from  
Bethnal Green



## About our residents at a glance:



**45%**

of tenants are in rent arrears



**68%**

of tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit



**21%**

of residents say they are vulnerable



**11%**

of residents have one or more disabilities



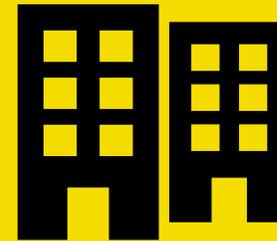
**58%\***

of leaseholders/  
freeholders let their  
property to others  
(\*estimated)



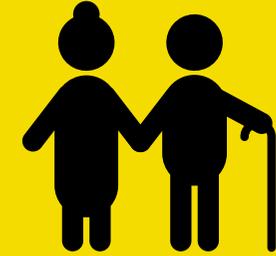
**83%**

of residents said they  
were satisfied with the  
communal cleaning  
and caretaking



**89%**

of residents say they  
were satisfied with  
their neighbourhood  
as a place to live



**13%**

of residents  
are over 70 years  
of age

**Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes**

# Annual Report 2015/16

## How to get in touch:

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