Meet the Residents’ Panel
Dear resident

We’ve spent a lot of time over the past few years really getting to know our residents, and making sure what we do is what you expect us to do.

We’re now in the fourth year of our Decent Homes programme and the second year of working with our current contractors - Axis, Breyer, Chigwell, Keepmoat and Richardson. Last year was a challenging one for the programme; we had to deliver an ambitious 12 month programme in just over six months. We did this at the same time as working with completely new contractors; they had to get to know us, our residents and the blocks in a very short space of time. None of that is easy and I know from talking to some residents and visiting properties that resident satisfaction suffered.

This year we’re already in full swing. We have a really good working relationship with the five contractors, and they know how to work with us, and how we do things. And I’m really pleased to say that the rating that residents give the work is improving. In March, those residents rating the works excellent/good and fair was 86%, but in April it dipped to 75% - by June it was back to 84%. Residents rating our work as excellent or good is also going up – from 46% in March to 71% in June. We’re not complacent, but I’m confident that we’re back on the right track.

The Decent Homes programme is a really important part of our work, but it’s not all we do. We really value your input and are always keen to hear what you think about any of the services we provide – good or bad. We love to get compliments, but your complaints are just as important to us; they let us know what we’re not so good at, and show us areas where we can improve.

Gavin Cansfield
Chief Executive

Working hard to improve our services

We’ve been working hard to improve the service we offer residents when they call us. We answered over 241,000 phone calls last year and it’s now our main point of contact for most residents, so it’s important we get it right, every time.

We’ve introduced many improvements over the past 18 months: investing in better and more training; introducing new systems; reducing waiting times; and for the first time, bringing all our customer service teams under one roof.

Despite making significant progress, we recognise that there is still more to be done. We’re working with residents as part of the Service Development Groups and we hope by working together we can continue to improve.

What you can expect when you call us on 020 7364 5015:

Knowledgeable staff
When you call us you’ll speak to a member of staff who has been trained extensively to resolve a wide range of problems. Last year we resolved 77% of enquiries first time.

48 hour call back guarantee
Sometimes we’re not able to resolve an issue the first time you call us. If this happens, we will get back to you within 48 hours.

Being polite and friendly
Our Customer Service Advisors will treat you like a real person, not a number. You can expect a polite and friendly service whenever you call us. We’ll also take ownership of your enquiry, and track all your contact with us.

Is there a STAR in your community?

The search has begun to find Tower Hamlets Homes’ most inspirational and worthy residents. If you know someone who lives in a Tower Hamlets Homes’ property who volunteers their time to make a difference to their neighbourhood and community, why not nominate them for a STAR in the Community award?

The six award categories are:
— Inspirational Resident Award
— Young person of the year award
— Contribution to resident involvement award
— Bringing people together award
— Environmental award
— Resident Group award

Winners will be judged by a panel of independent judges and announced at a special award ceremony in November.

Contact us for more information:
Email contactus@thh.org.uk

Eid Mubarak

We wish all our Muslim residents Eid Mubarak.
The festival of Eid-al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the month of prayer and fasting.
The Residents’ Panel – keeping up the good work

Hi! I’m Pam Haluwa, a resident from Dorset Neighbourhood in Bethnal Green and I’m the current chair of the Residents’ Panel. The Residents’ Panel is an independent group who monitor Tower Hamlets Homes’ services.

Our members are all Tower Hamlets Homes’ tenants and leaseholders, representing all areas of Tower Hamlets and are a mixture of men and women, old and young, and from different cultures and backgrounds. We’ve recently recruited four new members; I’m very pleased to introduce Mohammed Murad, Louise Cooper, Chris Lloyd and Aklima Begum.

We’ve been working hard since we were set up in 2009 to look at THH’s performance and investigate areas that aren’t performing well. So far, we have carried out the following reviews:

— Anti-social behaviour service - in-depth scrutiny
— Resident engagement service - in-depth scrutiny
— Estate inspections - ‘Light-touch’ scrutiny

I’m very proud of the work we’ve done so far but we know that we can’t afford to drop the ball now. Making sure Tower Hamlets Homes provides an excellent service to residents is what we do, and we need to keep on doing it.

Pam Haluwa
Chair of Residents’ Panel

Looking at the Resident Engagement service
I’m Ayesha Rahman, and this year I was involved in looking at how THH involves residents and gives them a chance to have a say in the work we do. As part of the review, we have:

— Met Tenants and Residents’ Association members;
— Met residents involved in Service Improvement Groups;
— Interviewed Tower Hamlets Homes staff;
— Met community organisations who THH works with;
— Carried out a survey of over 400 residents to find out how satisfied they are with the opportunities they have to get involved;

— Looked at policies, procedures and other housing providers’ resident engagement services; and
— Visited Brent Housing Partnership (who are a similar organisation to THH) to look at how they deliver their resident engagement service.

All this has been a lot of work! But we’re not done yet. We have published our findings and are working with Tower Hamlets Homes to put in place the recommendations and help them improve.

 Helping us improve
Do you want to help Tower Hamlets Homes get better at providing essential services to residents?

We are looking for THH residents who would like to join one or more of the following Service Development Groups:
— Anti Social Behaviour
— Environmental Services
— Leasehold
— Repairs
— Resident Access

For more information or an application pack please visit our website or contact us on:

Phone
020 7364 5015

Website
www.thh.org.uk

What’s next for the Resident Panel?
My name is Louise Cooper. I’ve only just joined the Residents’ Panel but I’m keen to make a difference to the housing service we all receive and make things better for us all.

Over the next few months, the Residents’ Panel is going to closely monitor key service areas through a variety of methods including resident satisfaction data, service workplans and also working closely with service development groups. I’m really looking forward to getting stuck in!
Helping vulnerable residents

Our caretakers are out and about in the neighbourhoods far more than other staff. They get to know residents, and go the extra mile to help people who need a little more help.

We know our caretakers have always gone above and beyond their daily duties of keeping the blocks clean and tidy. Since February 2014, Tower Hamlets Homes’ caretakers have helped vulnerable residents 189 times – this has been for a variety of things ranging from carrying shopping upstairs, giving a quick knock to say hello if a resident has come out of hospital, and helping an elderly resident who had fallen over.

“A lot of the time caretakers help people in addition to their day to day job, which can make a massive difference to a vulnerable resident’s day. We’re keen to record when these good deeds take place, so do let us know!”

Safe and secure scheme

Our ‘Safe and Secure’ scheme is a free support service for residents who would like us to keep in touch with them and check how they’re doing.

How does it work?

Just let us know how often you would like us to call you – once a week, every 6 weeks or every 12 weeks. And what you would like us to do if we can’t get hold of you, for example contact a family member or the emergency services.

If you are interested in joining our Safe and Secure scheme, please get in touch. We will visit you at home and talk you through everything that’s involved.

Thinking of moving to a smaller home?

Moving home can be a stressful and challenging time. With so many things to think about it’s good to have someone around to help you plan ahead and get things sorted out. Naz Khan, Tower Hamlets Homes Under Occupation Project Officer, offers one-to-one support to residents who want to downsize – from filling out forms to sorting out removals. Here Naz explains how it all works:

“Most residents downsize either because their current home is too big for them or because they have been affected by the government’s ‘bedroom tax’ and will find it easier to maintain and pay bills in a smaller home.

Even with the excitement of moving to a more suitable home that’s cheaper to run, residents often worry about the move itself and how they will cope. And that’s where I come in. I will help you get organised and support you through the whole process from start to finish. I will help with things like:

— filling in forms;
— bidding for a new home on the Council’s website;
— sorting out your removals;
— arranging to disconnect/reconnect your gas and electricity;
— getting rid of any unwanted furniture you may have;
— accompany you when you view your new home.

Moving can be an expensive time, so to help with the costs we offer residents financial support with things like:

— removals and packing;
— disconnecting and reconnecting household appliances;
— carpets for your new home;
— payment for white goods (eg washing machines and fridges).

You must give up at least one bedroom to qualify for financial support. If you owe rent arrears, we will deduct the amount you owe from the amount you are due to get and pay you the difference.

If you’re giving up a 3 bedroom home or larger, my colleague Sue Hammick, from the Council’s Lettings Team, will help. Sue will visit you at home, answer any questions or concerns you may have about the move, arrange your removals, and talk you through the options if you want to move out of Tower Hamlets.

If you’re thinking about moving to a smaller home and want to know more, why not give me, Naz, or Sue a call? We’re here to help.”

Naz Khan
Phone: 020 7364 5015
Email: contactus@thh.org.uk

Sue Hammick
Phone: 020 7364 0265
Email: sue.hammick@towerhamlets.gov.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of home you give up</th>
<th>Financial support you could get</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Bed</td>
<td>up to £1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bed</td>
<td>up to £1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bed</td>
<td>up to £2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Thinking of moving to a smaller home?
Helping out in times of need

Most of the time, we can all cope on our own, but sometimes, especially during times of stress or upheaval, we can need a little extra help.

“There had been an infestation at Mr Johnson’s flat, which meant that he couldn’t take any of his household items to his new home. We helped to find him a wardrobe, coffee table, microwave, sofa and chairs, a bed and a fridge. New carpets have been fitted. I also supported him to fill out a ‘change of circumstances’ form for his benefits and helped him to get some compensation.

Mr Johnson will move into his new flat soon and I know he will feel like his life is back on track.”

020 7364 5015  contactus@thh.org.uk

Shared views

Nearly 1 in 5 of THH tenants are over 70, yet we know Tower Hamlets as a whole has a large population of young people. Working with local artists, Shared Views was set up to create opportunities for younger and older residents to work together, and learn from each other.

“It’s fantastic to see how much older and younger people do have in common despite the different generations. The project has helped build relationships and understanding between residents who live in the same community – but may not otherwise have had the chance to get together.”

The small things matter

The look of where you live can be really important to how you feel about living there. If it’s tired and a bit shabby, it doesn’t make you feel as proud to live there. That’s why we’ve committed to cheering up some of the smaller areas of 100 of our blocks, all within 100 days. Whether it’s cleaning a stairwell, painting a cupboard or bench, tidying an outdoor space or giving a new coat of varnish to an external door, we think these small improvements will make the blocks we manage a more pleasant and welcoming place to live.

Here are some examples of our recent work. If you know of an area that you think needs some attention, just let us know.

020 7364 5015  contactus@thh.org.uk
Year 4 of Decent Homes makes a good start

The fourth year of the Tower Hamlets Decent Homes programme is now in full swing. This year, as well as replacing tenants’ kitchens and bathrooms and doing works inside their flats, we are starting work on the outside of blocks.

We will be surveying blocks to find out what needs doing, including replacing roofs, fitting new windows, repairing concrete, walkways and balconies, and external decorations. Look out for drop-in sessions in your area to find out more.

Satisfaction going up
We’re pleased that, after a rocky third year when we started with new contractors and had a lot to do in too little time, residents are now happier with what we’re doing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>% of Residents Rating the Works ‘Good or Excellent’</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>71%</td>
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Leaseholders
This year will also be the first year that involves leaseholders. We are keen to involve you at an early stage, and will write to you to invite you to information sessions so you can find out more about what is planned for your block. Once the scope of work has been agreed, we will issue you with a formal Section 20 notice.

We know that the work will have an impact on many leaseholders and so we have set up a number of repayment options, including:

- 5% Prompt Payment Discount
- 12 Month Interest-Free installments
- Self Help options, such as:
  - A personal loan
  - A mortgage extension
  - Re-mortgaging – You should speak to your mortgage lender about these options.
  - Equity Release – older homeowners can get a loan secured on their home. You should speak to an independent legal and financial adviser about this.
  - Talking to the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) if you receive certain state benefits.

- Means-tested Supported Payment Options
  Please note we can only offer this to leaseholders that have been refused a personal loan by two reputable lenders. The schemes that can be considered are:
  - An Extended Payment Offer
  - An Extended Interest Bearing Offer
  Repayments are interest-free for the first 2 or 3 years.

Discuss these options
020 7364 5015 (option 3 then 1)

Kick starting young residents’ careers

As part of our Decent Homes work, we and our contractors are helping young people to get experience and gain skills to help them find work. Recently, a group of 16 young people participated in our contractor Keepmoat’s work experience programme, which included health and safety training, tower training, CV advice and hands-on experience.
We can help you to find a job

Unemployed or looking for work?
Need some help?
We are working with our partners Account 3, Limehouse Project and Skills Match to help and support Tower Hamlets Homes’ residents to find training and employment.

We can help you to access the following, for free.
— One-to-one support
— Help with writing or updating your CV
— Skills training
— Preparing for interviews workshops
— Apprenticeships
— Help to find a job

We can also give you advice and support on:
— Welfare Reform – changes to benefits and the options available to you;
— Money and debt – managing your debt, how to budget and advice on bank accounts;
— Living independently – helping you live an independent life if you need support to do so;
— Foodbank – putting you in touch with your local Foodbank;
— Mental health – Housing advice if you have individual needs or have mental health issues;
— Fuel poverty – Helping residents use energy more efficiently and reduce their bills

If you are interested any of the advice and support above, please contact us.

Phone 020 7364 5015
Email contactus@thh.org.uk

New homes in Bradwell Street and Collingwood neighbourhood

We have now started to build the first new council housing in Tower Hamlets for many decades. Work has started on the site in Bradwell Street (behind Queen Mary University) to demolish some disused garages to make way for 12 new homes and a community centre for local residents.

More new homes in 2015
Next year, work will start to build more new homes and a new community facility in the Collingwood neighbourhood.
We hope to submit the planning application at the end of the summer and are working with local residents to make sure we listen to their views and needs.

Getting stuck in to grounds maintenance

A home is more than a building: green spaces, trees and flowers can turn an estate into a neighbourhood and a collection of buildings into a community.

Last year, after poor performance by our grounds maintenance contractor, we decided to manage the grounds maintenance service ourselves. After getting the new team up and running, our first priority was tackling some of the areas that had been neglected by the contractor.

We have invested in the service by using new machinery to make us more efficient, such as ride-on mowers, which mean cutting grass is now a breeze for our workers.

We've also now got a quad bike which is specially equipped to spray weeds on estate paths and roads, parking areas and other hard surfaces across our neighbourhoods. This means that weeds can be dealt with quickly and more efficiently, freeing up the team to concentrate on other important tasks.

The service is improving and providing value for money - 2013/14 resident satisfaction is up to 72% and we've managed to reduce the overall operational cost for residents by 19%.

This season will be a busy time for the new team. But we are confident that through careful management of the team, the green spaces and gardens across our neighbourhoods are ones you can be proud of.
Your local Housing Offices

**1 Rushmead**
Bethnal Green, London, E2 6NE

**Opening hours**
— 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except the last Wednesday of every month 10am to 5pm)
— 9am to 1pm Saturday
— Closed Bank Holidays

Please note last entry is 30 minutes before closing.

**Access**
Wheelchair access, automatic doors, hearing induction loop, magnifier sheets, language translation, private interview rooms, assistance dogs welcome, breastfeeding friendly accredited.

**Idea Store, Watney Market**
260 Commercial Road
London, E1 2FB

**Opening hours**
— 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday (except the last Wednesday of every month 10am to 5pm)
— 9am to 12.30pm Saturday
— Closed Bank Holidays

Please note last entry is 30 minutes before closing.

**Access**
Wheelchair access, automatic doors, hearing induction loop, magnifier sheets, language translation, private interview rooms, assistance dogs welcome, breastfeeding friendly accredited.

**542 Roman Road**
London, E3 5ES

**Opening hours**
— 9am to 7pm Monday
— 9am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday
— 9am to 1pm Saturday
— Closed Bank Holidays

**Access**
Wheelchair access, hearing induction loop, magnifier sheets, language translation, private interview room, assistance dogs welcome, accessible toilet, baby changing facilities, breastfeeding friendly accredited.