

Looking Back and Looking Forward

– Join us at **your** event!

Our upcoming October event at York Hall will focus on residents making decisions and shaping the way we provide our services to you. The event will see workshops on anti-social behaviour, overcrowding, repairs, leasehold services, resident engagement, decent homes and our new service standards.

Maggie Taylor, Resident Engagement Manager, told Open Door: "The day's all about us working together to find solutions. It's much more than residents hearing about what we plan to do or telling us about what they'd like to see; it's about residents actively joining in the decision making process."

Places for this event are limited, so don't miss the chance to join us in shaping your housing service. To reserve your place please contact the Resident Engagement team on ☎ **0800 7836845** and keep an eye out for our report on the event in the next issue of Open Door.

When:

Saturday, 3 October 2009
10:30am for an 11am start
to 3pm.

Where:

York Hall
5-15 Old Ford Road
Bethnal Green
London E2 9PJ

Go green and pick up an energy efficient bulb!

If you pop down to your Neighbourhood Housing Office during October, you can pick up a FREE energy efficient light bulb courtesy of Tower Hamlets Homes. The bulbs last for up to 10 years and save you money every time you switch on the light. Don't forget you can still pick up a free bag for life for all your shopping needs!



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Dear Resident

As Open Door went to print, we were busy gearing up for our second residents' event of the year. The event has been planned by residents for residents and I hope it gives you a perfect opportunity to come and have your say on what Tower Hamlets Homes has done so far and what you think should happen next. The event also gives you the chance to hear about our future plans, take part in a series of workshops and help shape our service standards. I do hope you can come and I look

forward to seeing you and hearing your ideas on the day.

We have been listening to residents who want to see a visible, flexible service that's closer to our customers. That's why, over the coming months, your Neighbourhood Housing Service will be focused on the needs of 26 individual neighbourhoods. It's all about making our services easier to use and bringing them closer to you.

Lastly, I know how important it is that we really get to grips with anti-social behaviour in



our neighbourhoods and I hope you are as pleased as I am to read (opposite) about our new ASB team and their early successes.

Gavin Cansfield
Chief Executive

Making services simpler

Over the summer we've been improving your Neighbourhood Housing Service, so no matter where you live there will be just one neighbourhood team to take care of all your housing needs – from repairs and communal gardening to block cleaning and refuse

removal. It's all about making things simpler and easier for you to access our services.

And even better, every Monday your neighbourhood housing officer will carry out a walkabout on your estate – in addition to the inspection they do each month – to make sure your estate is up to scratch. This means cleaner, greener estates for everyone this autumn.

We've been listening to residents who want a flexible, highly visible service that's closer to our customers. We've identified 26 neighbourhoods each of which will have a dedicated team with your Neighbourhood Housing Officer, Caretaker, Repairs Inspector and contractor, who will work

together to deliver great services.

And over the coming months, we'll be introducing evening and weekend working, more appointments and regular drop-ins near you, so you can see us when it's convenient for you.

All of this means your Neighbourhood Housing Service will focus on the needs of your neighbourhood. We'll also be introducing local newsletters giving you better information about your Neighbourhood Housing Service and local events. Keep an eye out for the poster with your Neighbourhood Housing Officer and contact details going up in the notice boards in your block later this month.

£1.1 million to tackle fuel poverty

Roy MacPeple, our Sustainability and Biodiversity Co-ordinator and our New Initiatives Team, secured over £1 million of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency [HCA] to help tackle fuel poverty in homes we manage.

The money will help us target Bethnal Green properties that are hard to insulate such as high rise blocks.

"The money will go towards improving 'hard to insulate' homes, which will reduce residents' energy bills, as well as doing our bit to cut CO₂ emissions" Roy explained.

As part of our Sustainability, Regeneration and Community Development Strategy, the successful contractors will hire local trainees who will gain valuable experience and training, as well as a chance of a permanent job. The programme will also become part of our Decent Homes strategy.

BETHNAL GREEN chat

News for residents living in **Bethnal Green**

ASB round up

On patrol in Bethnal Green!

Joint enforcement patrols with the Police and our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) officers are already making a difference in our neighbourhoods. The patrols, which take place from Thursday nights right through the weekend, go to where residents tell us anti-social behaviour takes place.

In the first three weeks of operation the patrols have made more than 170 visits to 50 estates, including 45 night-time patrols in Bethnal Green. So far the patrols have made four arrests and issued more than 200 verbal warnings, including 79 in Bethnal Green, as well as taking two youths home to their parents.

On one patrol to Heathpool Court the team stopped 4 young men. Following identity checks, it turned out that one youth was

wanted for criminal damage and was promptly arrested. Another youth was arrested for breaking his Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO).

Kobir Choudhury, Bethnal Green ASB officer told Open Door: "The patrols are great. Having the back up of the police means, we can really do our job. We're taking a zero tolerance approach to ASB because residents deserve to feel safe."

The patrols share intelligence with our caretakers and the Safer Neighbourhoods Team about ASB hotspots and visit the neighbourhoods reported to our ASB hotline by residents.

ASB manager, Claire Demmel, told Open Door: "The



joint patrols with the police are another great example of what our dedicated ASB staff can do. We are about making residents feel safe and we want residents to have the confidence we're doing everything we can to tackle these problems."

Report ASB!

If you are experiencing an ongoing problem with ASB on your estate, don't put up with it any longer – give the ASB team a call on ☎ 0800 917 5918. If you see crime being carried out on your estate, report it immediately to the Police by calling 999.

Young people

– get creative, get active, **get involved!**

With half term coming up later this month why not join AMP to meet other young people and find out the latest places to go and things to do in Bethnal Green. AMP is a resource for young people aged 11 to 19 – the voice of young people in Tower Hamlets. Join for news about what's on and really useful information to help you look after yourself – your health, your money and your work and studies. Interested? Check out their website www.amp.uk.net

Community safety awards 2010



Do you know someone who really helps make Tower Hamlets a safer place?

Nominations are now open for the Tower Hamlets Community Safety Awards. You can nominate anyone living or working in Tower Hamlets and there are awards for individuals, community projects or teams working to reduce crime, drugs or anti-social behaviour in the community. So if you know someone working hard to tackle ASB why not nominate them?

To nominate simply download and complete the form from www.towerhamlets.gov.uk or pick up a form at your Housing Office and One Stop Shop, local Ideas Store or Police Station.

BETHNAL GREEN chat

Big homes buy-back

Nine 3 and 4 bed former leasehold properties have been bought back by the council to be managed by Tower Hamlets Homes and should be available to rent within weeks! The homes were purchased as part of the council's £20 million Local Homes Initiative to help overcrowded families.

Forty more properties are already under offer and we aim to get up to 100 available to rent by next year. This will help alleviate some of the overcrowding pressures we have in our homes. The Local Homes Initiative hopes to buy back as many 3 and 4 bedroom leasehold properties as

possible to rent as decent, affordable homes to people who really need the space.

More than 300 residents have already rung up to find out more. If you are a leaseholder with a three or four bedroom home and want to find out more, call Susie Quinn on ☎ 020 7364 6250.



Keeping you Safe and Sound

Enclosed with this issue of Open Door

is the latest Fire Safety advice leaflet from the London Fire Brigade's new campaign – Keep Your Community Safe and Sound. The campaign encourages all residents to become fire safety champions by making sure that they, their families and neighbours are safe from fire.

Bruce Epsly, LFB Borough Commander told Open Door about the campaign: "Firefighters are best known for putting out fires, but one of our main aims is to prevent them by working with people so they know how to protect themselves. Our Keep Your Community Safe & Sound campaign asks residents to think about the risks posed by fire in their homes.

As Tower Hamlets Borough Commander, I know that our fire safety messages are beginning

to get through but so many of the fires we attend in the borough could easily have been avoided if people were more aware of how to protect themselves and their families.

There were 220 accidental fires in the home in our borough

last year, so we know there is still work for us to do and we need the help of residents to do it.

Keeping your community safe and sound is as easy as it sounds. We want everyone in the borough to become a fire safety champion by making sure that they, their family and neighbours are safe from fire. Getting a smoke alarm, testing and maintaining it, as well as planning an escape route from a fire can dramatically decrease the risk of death or serious injury. Making the right preparations could save your life."

Remember – if you would like to arrange a free home fire safety visit, call the London Fire Brigade on freephone ☎ 08000 28 44 28 and they will visit your home, talk to you about fire risks and fit free smoke alarms if you need them. You can also arrange a visit by emailing smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk

"...planning an escape route from a fire can dramatically decrease the risk of death or serious injury. Making the right preparations could save your life."

Bruce Epsly, LFB Borough Commander



Fire Safety Action day Hereford and Avebury - Saturday 3 October

Going, Going...

The demolition of Aden House started last month, as part of the regeneration scheme at Ocean Estate. The plans will see over 700 new and replacement homes being

built with a further 1,200 homes refurbished, in a multi-million pound partnership between Tower Hamlets Homes, the Council, Ocean New Deal for Communities and the Government's Homes and Communities Agency.





Homeseekers open day attracts hundreds

More than 330 residents came along to our Homeseekers Open Day at Bow last month to talk to specialist housing teams about their housing options and find out more about Homeseekers. Attendance more than doubled from the last event.

Bethnal Green resident, Sarah gave the Open Day her tick of

approval: "I liked the friendly helpful advisors, and the fact they really took time, talked, listened and gave information."

Three lucky attendees won £25 Argos vouchers for taking part in a resident survey providing feedback on the event. The Homeseekers Open Day will return again next year.

Chicksand Residents help improve the 'Ghat'

Chicksand Ghat – an open space off Chicksand Street – is to be improved following a meeting with residents in August. Residents had the chance to view concept designs for the improvements and tell us what they want to see in the space.

The plans include two new play areas for toddlers and 8-13 year olds, new seating and planting as well as a green gym for outdoor exercise. New lighting will also benefit the open space, improving community safety, as well as ensuring that the football pitch can be used in the evenings. A new open grass area will provide a focal point for community events – a place where people from all ages can get together.

Ian Dagleish from our New Initiatives team told Open Door: "The event with residents was a great success. We had over 50 people from the estate, local businesses and community organisations telling us their vision for the Ghat.



Their enthusiasm to see the space revitalised was infectious! Giving residents what they want helps put them at the heart of what we do."

The £500k project, funded by the council and delivered in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes, is due to start before Christmas.

If you want to see the plans for the Ghat visit Bethnal Green Housing Office or contact Ian on **020 7364 7195**.



Better boilers to save money

Bancroft, Stubbs and Mark Houses.

The scheme, funded under Tower Hamlets Council's £25 million Home Investment Programme, replaces old individual

of the new boilers, resident Mrs Ziff (featured left), was thrilled with her new boiler after having electrical storage heating for the last 33 years. She said: "It's just great. Instant hot water all the time – just lovely!"

Tower Hamlets Homes has installed new boilers in nearly 900 properties since April last year, investing £3 million to ensure residents have cheaper heating and hot water. More than 600 Bethnal Green homes have benefited including

boilers with modern, energy efficient ones designed to save residents money on energy bills and help cut our CO₂ emissions.

A recipient of one

Rogers Estate Repair Day – Tuesday 6 October

Come and meet your repairs contractor and get any outstanding repairs sorted out. Neighbourhood housing staff will also be on hand to answer your questions, bringing more services closer to your home.

notice board

Money Matters

Service charge drop-in sessions

Leasehold Services are holding Saturday drop-in sessions on October 3, 10, 17 and 24 giving you the opportunity to discuss your charges with a leasehold officer. They will take place from 9am to 1pm at our Stepney and Wapping Office at Cheviot House and Bethnal Green Office at Rushmead.

Sorting out your debts

What's the worst that can happen?

When you have lots of debts to pay, it's important to work out which are a priority. A priority debt is one where non-payment could result in losing your home, losing services or ultimately going to prison. Examples of priority debts and consequences for non-payment are shown below:

Type of debt	Consequences for non-payment
Rent	Eviction from your home
Council Tax	Imprisonment or Bailiffs
Electricity or gas	Disconnection or prepayment meter
Magistrate court fines	Imprisonment or Bailiffs
TV licence	Imprisonment or Bailiffs
Child support/maintenance	Imprisonment/Bailiffs/money taken from wages or benefits

With non-priority debts, such as credit card bills or personal loans, you can't be imprisoned or forced to pay the debt without a county court order. But your credit rating might go down and some companies will use debt collectors. Please contact your arrears officer urgently if you have missed a rent payment on 020 7364 3333.

Help with your rent – work it out!

Visit our website and try our Housing Benefits Calculator to find out if you can get help with your rent. Anyone who has to pay rent for their home can claim Housing Benefit, as long as you are not paying rent to a member of your immediate family.

Or, to find out more about claiming benefits, please call the Council's Housing Benefits team on 020 7364 5001. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Did you know?

Between April and June 2009 we evicted 7 tenants for rent arrears. If you have missed your rent payments don't let this happen to you, please contact your arrears office on 020 7364 3333 urgently.

How are we doing?

Monthly tracker

To make sure we're on the right track to deliver great services and achieve our 2 stars next year we've introduced a monthly survey tracking the things we know you're concerned about. Each month we'll contact about 200 residents and ask them about key aspects of the way we do things. Open Door will keep you informed about how we're doing.

Yes 43.1%

Is our service changing for the better?

More than 4 out of 10 residents thought our services were changing for the better. But nearly 5 out of 10 residents (48.2%) thought they were staying the same so we know we have more to do to deliver great services to you.

Good 64%

How well do we look after green areas?

More than 6 out of 10 residents (64%) felt we were good or excellent at looking after our green areas and nearly 2 out of 10 (14%) thought we did a fair job. This is a big improvement on our April caretaking survey, where only half of residents (48%) thought we were doing well and 1 in 4 (26%) thought we did a poor job.

Good 63%

How good is our cleaning and caretaking?

More than 6 out of 10 residents (63%) rated our cleaning and caretaking as good or excellent, with a further 13% rating us fair. This is a good improvement on our April caretaking survey where only half of residents (50%) thought we were doing a good job and nearly 1 in 3 thought we did a poor job. We know we still need to do better, and we're working with residents to make sure we deliver a great caretaking service.

Black History Month

Keep an eye out for information on events and displays for October's Black History Month. Events celebrating black history, experience and culture take place across Tower Hamlets and include the **Somali Week Festival** Friday 23 October to Saturday 31 October at Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green. For more information visit www.towerhamletsarts.org.uk

Leaseholder Focus Group – Wednesday 28 October

We want you to have a say in how we deliver our services. The Leaseholder Focus Group is a great way for you to get involved and have your say. It's open to all our leaseholders and freeholders, so come along to the next group on **Wednesday 28 October** at the Toby Club, Vawdrey Close (off Cleveland Way), London E1 4UA 6pm to 8pm.

Leaseholder newsletter

Service charge invoices and a special Leasehold Focus explaining the charges were sent out to leaseholders in September. By combining our regular newsletter with information about service charges, we saved on printing and postage costs, delivering better value for money for residents. If you didn't receive your invoice or if you have a query about your bill please contact your customer services team on ☎ 020 7364 3236 and an advisor will talk to you about payment plan options.

Welcome Barbara

Meet Barbara Brownlee, our new Housing and Customer Services Director. Some residents will already know Barbara from her recent work with Tower Hamlets Homes on repairs and estate inspections. Barbara takes the lead on our key neighbourhood housing services including ASB, caretaking and gardening, Housing Offices, Rents, Home Ownership and Lettings.

Barbara told Open Door: "It's a great privilege to join Tower Hamlets Homes. It's also a challenge as we're just nine months from our inspection. So my main focus is on delivering great, value for money services to make sure we get our 2 stars to release the much needed investment in the homes we manage."

Barbara explained: "I think it's



clear we've started to make some real improvements but we know we still have a long way to go to deliver the sort of standards that residents deserve. Our new ASB team is starting to make a difference and I'll be making sure we do everything we can to sustain the improvements in caretaking and gardening, as well as continuing to improve our services to leaseholders."

Barbara continued: "Residents need to know we're tackling the things they care about and that we'll deal with their problems. This is why the Neighbourhood Housing Service will be focused on the needs of the 26 individual neighbourhoods."

Board news

Meet your new Board members

We have three new board members:



Shahanara Begum is a resident board member and is a tenant representative living on the Cranbrook Estate. Shahanara works in the Education sector and, prior to joining the Board, was an active mystery shopper.

Sukkanya Siva is an independent board member and works as a Development Manager for a Registered Social Landlord. Sukkanya joined the Board so that she can use her experience and passion for housing to shape the future of an established company with a team of people working to a common goal.



Cllr Alibor Choudhury is a councillor board member who represents Stepney and St Dunstan's and serves on the Council's Grants Panel, Development Committee, Human Resources Committee, Strategic Development Committee, Overview and Health and Scrutiny.

Getting in touch

It's never been easier to contact your housing services. Tower Hamlets Homes will deal promptly with your enquiry whether you prefer to telephone, visit or use our website.



How to contact us

Service 24/7

Whether you want to report a repair, pay rent, get involved or just find out more about Tower Hamlets Homes, our website is available 24 hours a day. Log on to www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk

If you don't have a computer at home you can access the internet for free at the council's Idea Stores.

General Housing Enquiries

Customer Contact Centre Telephone
☎ 020 7364 5015

The Centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm on Saturdays

This is the number to report local housing issues such as caretaking and parking to tenants' rights and responsibilities and anti-social behaviour.

Housing Repairs

☎ 0800 376 1637 – 24 hour helpline
☎ 0800 376 1638 – 24 hour helpline
Bengali/Sylheti

Homeseekers' Bidding Line

☎ 0845 270 2400 – 24 hour helpline

Face to face contact

Bow Housing Office
Gladstone Place,
1 Ewart Place (off Roman
Road), London E3 5EQ

☎ 020 7364 3335

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

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

☎ 020 7364 3880

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturdays 8am to 4pm

Poplar Housing Office
15 Market Square,
Chrip St,
London E14 6AQ

☎ 020 7364 5120

**Stepney and Wapping
Housing Office**
Cheviot House,
227-233 Commercial Road,
London E1 2BU

☎ 020 7364 3844

ASB – mini A-Z

Anti Social Behaviour

(24hr Freephone hotline) ☎ 0800 917 5918

Domestic Violence

(24hr National help line) ☎ 0808 200 0247

Hate Crime

☎ 0800 138 0521

Noise Patrol

☎ 0207 364 5007

Have you got news for us?

We want to give our readers what they want... but we need your help!

We want your stories, photos, achievements, letters, tips, poems or even your favourite recipe! Tell us about yourselves, we can't wait to hear from you and we'll print the best contributions.

Stories big or small it doesn't matter, send your ideas to: communications@towerhamletshomes.org.uk or give us a call on ☎ 020 7364 7173.

We can now provide our information on request in large print, audio and in our main community languages. Support is also available in helping to learn English.

আমি এই খবর জানতে চাই যে আপনি কতটা জানেন। যদি আপনি জানেন
কোন কোন বিষয়, আপনি আমাদের পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হতে চান, তাহলে
আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করে জানতে পারবেন।

WE CAN NOW PROVIDE OUR INFORMATION ON REQUEST IN LARGE PRINT, AUDIO AND IN OUR
MAIN COMMUNITY LANGUAGES. SUPPORT IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN HELPING TO LEARN ENGLISH.

這類的資料對你是非常重要的，如果你需要進一步解
釋，或查詢詳情，請儘早與我們世界服務處聯絡。

ĐỂ QUẢN TRỊ THÔNG TIN VÀ HIỆU QUẢ ĐƯỢC CẤP LẬP
THỨC VÀ NẾU QUÝ VỊ CẦN ĐƯỢC GIẢI THÍCH THÊM
VỀ THÔNG TIN CHÚNG TÔI THÌ THÔNG TIN XIN LIÊN LẠC
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