

Living in your home

**Tower
Hamlets
Homes**

For Tenants



Phone

020 7364 5015



Email

contactus@
towerhamletshomes.org.uk



Website

www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk

If you need help, here's how to get in touch

Contact us



Website

www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk

Find answers to your questions, learn about our services, find out what we can do for you and view all of our leaflets.



Phone

020 7364 5015

Text-phone

Call us with the help of BT Text Relay
18001 020 7364 5015



Email

For general enquiries

contactus@towerhamletshomes.org.uk

For rents

rents@towerhamletshomes.org.uk

For service charges

leasehold@towerhamletshomes.org.uk



Write to us

PO Box 66355
London E14 1GU

Every care has been taken to make sure that information contained in this leaflet is correct as at May 2010.

Tower Hamlets Homes manages homes and estates owned by Tower Hamlets Council.

Tower Hamlets Homes is a trading name of Tower Hamlets Homes Limited. Registered in England and Wales.

Repairs Helpline

For when you need to report a repair or ask us about the progress of a repair that has been already reported. Someone is available 24 hours, every day.



Phone

0800 376 1637
(free from landlines)
or 020 7364 7070

Bengali/Sylheti

call between 9am and 5pm
on 0800 376 1638 free from
landlines or 020 7364 5151

আপনি যদি বাংলাভাষায় কোন মেরামতের কথা রিপোর্ট করতে চান তবে সকাল ৯টা থেকে বিকাল ৫টার মধ্যে 0800 376 1638 নম্বরে যা ল্যান্ডলাইন থেকে ফ্রি বা 020 7364 5151 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।



Email

repairs@towerhamletshomes.org.uk
(not for emergency repairs)

Anti-social behaviour

For when you need help or advice on anti-social behaviour



Phone

0800 917 5918
(free from landlines)

Your local Housing Office

1 Rushmead

Bethnal Green
London, E2 6NE

Open

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

Access

Wheelchair access, hearing loop
in reception area

Cheviot House

227-233 Commercial Road
London, E1 2BU

Open

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

Access

Wheelchair access, hearing loop
in reception area

542 Roman Road

London, E3 5ES

Open

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

Access

Wheelchair access, hearing loop
in reception area

In partnership
with:



TOWER HAMLETS



B

Here to help – when you need it

Every time you phone, email or come to see us at one of our offices, your Customer Services team will be on hand to give you quality housing advice, and if they can't they'll log your details and get one of our housing experts to get back to you.

So if you have any questions about your tenancy such as changing your contact details or ending your tenancy and moving out – contact us, we're here to help. We're also here if you want advice about renting out a room, making improvements to your home, or taking out home insurance.

C

Meeting your needs in your neighbourhood

We know your home is really important to you. That's why we provide you with a local, flexible and visible housing service in the neighbourhood you live in. To meet your local housing needs, you have a Neighbourhood Housing Officer who works exclusively in your area and coordinates a team of specialist staff to make sure you get the services that suit your day to day needs.

You can find photos for your Neighbourhood Team on our website, in your Neighbourhood Newsletter or on your local notice board. To arrange an appointment with your Neighbourhood Housing Officer, get in touch with our Customer Services Team.

Customer Services Team



Phone
020 7364 5015



Email
contactus@
towerhamletshomes.org.uk

D

About your tenancy

If you have a question about your tenancy or need advice about the tenancy rules, please contact us – we're here to help.

You become a tenant when you sign a tenancy agreement and live in the property as your home. Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract.

There are two types of tenancy agreement. If you have been a tenant for at least 12 months you are a secure tenant. If you have been a tenant for less than 12 months, you will probably be a probationary tenant.

Probationary tenants have fewer rights - but as long as there are no problems during your first year with us, you automatically become a secure tenant.

If you are not sure which agreement you have or you have lost your copy of your tenancy rules please ask us.

E

Rights and responsibilities

Your tenancy rules tell you all about your rights and responsibilities and the rules you agreed to follow when you signed your tenancy agreement.

You have the right to	Secure	Probationary
Live peacefully in your home without being unnecessarily interrupted by us or disturbed by your neighbours.	✓	✓
Carry out your own improvements, after checking with us first.	✓	
Rent out a room, after checking with us first.	✓	
Apply to exchange or swap properties with another tenant, after checking with us first.	✓	
Buy your home under the Right to Buy scheme (certain rules apply).	✓	
Be consulted about proposed changes to the services you receive.	✓	✓
Get certain repairs fixed (see your Repairs Guide for more information).	✓	✓
Pass your tenancy on to a family member who lives with you when you die (certain rules apply).	✓	
Appeal against decisions we make that you don't agree with.	✓	✓

Your main responsibilities are to	Secure	Probationary
Pay your rent and other charges on time.	✓	✓
Take care of the property and do any repairs you're responsible for.	✓	✓
Live in the property as your main and only home and let us know if you're going to be away from your home for more than a month.	✓	✓
Make sure that everyone in your household, including children and visitors, behave responsibly and don't harass, threaten or cause nuisance to your neighbours or our staff.	✓	✓
Let us know at least 28 days before you move out if you intend to end your tenancy.	✓	✓
Ask us first if you want to do something such as have a pet, rent out a room or make home improvements.	✓	✓

Our main responsibilities are to	Secure	Probationary
Consult you on any changes to your tenancy.	✓	✓
Keep your home in good repair and weather proof, and any heating, water, gas or electricity supply in working order.	✓	✓
Let you know if there are any changes to your rent or other charges at least 28 days before it's due.	✓	✓
Keep you informed about changes to what we do or how you can contact us.	✓	✓
Give you at least 24 hours notice – unless it is an emergency – before coming into your home to carry out inspections, repairs, gas safety checks or construction work.	✓	✓
Keep up-to-date contact details for you and let you see the information about you that's on file, and correct it if it's wrong.	✓	✓



Extra support if you need it

We can help you if you need extra support to live independently or to manage your tenancy. Lots of factors can make people more vulnerable, both in the short term or long term – such as having a disability, misusing alcohol or drugs or simply getting older. And there are times in everyone's life when they feel more vulnerable or in need of support, such as grieving after a death of someone close or going into hospital.

If you are finding it hard coping, you can get help with claiming benefits, managing your bills, or sorting out problems with your neighbours. If you could benefit from support, talk to us – we're here to help. We'll be clear about what we can do directly to support you, or we can put you in touch with other organisations who can give you support.

Where we can, we will use the information you want to give us to tailor our services to you where we can. For example, we can give you extra time to complete transactions, or change the way we contact you or communicate with you.

If you are already receiving support from another organisation, please tell us about it so we can check with you if there's anything else we can do to help you live securely and independently in your home. We'll ask you from time to time if there's anything else we can do to support you.





Changes to your tenancy

Change of personal details

If any of your details change such as your name or phone number or if someone is living with you, let us know as soon as possible. The information you give us will only be used by us, and will be kept confidential.

Adding someone to your tenancy

If you are the only tenant but your partner wants to share the rights and responsibilities of your tenancy, please contact us. Certain rules apply and we will talk these through with you.

Divorce, separation and dissolution of civil partnership

If you are involved in a divorce or separation, your tenancy rights may change. We don't have the power to decide who can live in your home – only the couple involved in the divorce or separation, or a property transfer order made by the court, can make this decision.





Ending your tenancy and moving out

Because a tenancy is a legal contract, you must give us 28 days notice when you want to leave. Rent is payable for the whole of this period. To help, we will give you a final rent account for your tenancy and a handy 'before you go' checklist.

During the first two weeks of your notice period we will visit you at home to check the condition of the property and to agree with you any repairs you are responsible for. We will discuss what happens next and tell you how to return your keys.

Please remember you have to pay us for removing any rubbish left in your property, or for any damage that has not been repaired – we'll let you know if this applies to you and how to pay within a week of your departure.

When we will end your tenancy

Sometimes we have to end your tenancy and ask you to move. This might be because we are carrying out major construction works or you have inherited your tenancy and your home has more bedrooms than you need.

If we have to ask you to move for one of these reasons, we'll always offer you another home suitable for your needs.

We will also end your tenancy if you break one of the tenancy rules that you agreed to follow when you signed your tenancy agreement. This might be because you have not paid your rent or are causing a nuisance to your neighbours or renting out your home while you live somewhere else.

If we have to end your tenancy for any of the above reasons we will do so through the courts to make sure you have a fair hearing.



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Adaptations for older and disabled residents

Adaptations are changes to your home to make it easier for you to get around, such as grab rails or walk-in showers. They help you stay independent and can make everyday life safer and easier.

If you feel that adaptations or equipment would help you manage things more easily, please contact Tower Hamlets Council's Occupational Therapy Team and they will advise you on how your home can be adapted to help you to live more independently. An Occupational Therapist will usually need to visit you.

The Council will tell us if you would benefit from an adaptation. If it's appropriate for us to do the work, we will contact you to arrange to carry out these works within 5 weeks. We will let you know who is dealing with your case and who the contractor will be. We will make sure you have access to basic facilities while we carry out the work.

If you are a tenant aged over 65 we will provide some adaptations on request such as fitting lever taps or raising electrical sockets.

Occupational Therapy Early Intervention Team



Phone
020 7364 5948



Email
occupationaltherapy@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Condensation

Condensation can cause damage to your property and, in the long run, may cause permanent damage to some parts of the structure of the building.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between condensation and damp. As a rule, condensation is likely to occur in areas where there is not much movement, such as in corners, cupboards or bathrooms.

You can take a number of steps to prevent condensation in your home. Try to reduce the moisture produced in your home by closing the kitchen door when cooking, and drying clothes in the bathroom with the door closed.

Ventilate your home from time to time by opening windows at both sides of the property.

If you are worried about condensation, please ask us for further advice or visit our website.

Decorating

You are responsible for decorating your home, but if you are over 65 and receive housing benefit, or you are over 60 and receive disability living allowance and don't have anyone under 60 living with you, you may be eligible for our decorating scheme for older and disabled residents. Please contact us for more information.

Going away

You should tell us if you plan to be away from your home for more than four weeks. We'll need to know when you plan to come back and how to contact you in case of emergency. Remember, you need to make arrangements for paying your rent while you're away, and it's a good idea to have a friend or relative who can check on your home.

You should also check your insurance policy, as it may not cover items that are left in a house for more than 30 days while you are away.

If you plan to be away for more than three months or want someone to look after your home while you're away you'll need to ask us first or you may lose your rights as a tenant.



Home improvements

We are happy for you to improve your home, but please ask us first before you start any work. We will normally agree, but if we say no, we'll give you the reason in writing.

You don't need our permission to decorate your home with wallpaper or paint (see page 11).

Don't forget you may need planning permission to make certain improvements. You can get advice about planning and building control by contacting Tower Hamlets Council.

You may be entitled to be reimbursed for some types of home improvement when you move out. We can give you a list of what kinds of improvements these are. The amount paid is based on the original cost of the improvement and how long it has been in use. Please contact us for more information.



Home ownership options

Buying your own home

You can buy your home from us as long as you've been a tenant for at least five years. Some homes such as those built for people with disabilities can't be bought.

If you're interested in buying your home please contact us and we'll explain how the scheme works and answer your questions.

We're on hand if you want to meet with us and go through the offer with you, explain what options you have, the costs of becoming a home owner and the buying process.


Other housing options

You can now take advantage of a new simplified house hunting scheme for affordable home ownership and rented properties in Tower Hamlets, Barking and Dagenham, City, Hackney, Havering, Newham, Redbridge or Waltham Forest. There are several schemes that could help you to own part or all of a home including part buy, part rent (also called shared ownership).

Contact the Housing Options service to register and to find out more.




Housing Options service

 **Phone**
0845 230 8099

 **Website**
www.housingoptions.co.uk

Tower Hamlets Council

 **Phone**
020 7364 5000



Inheriting a tenancy

If you die, a partner or close relative who has been living with you can inherit your tenancy (also known as succession). We can advise if someone living with you can inherit your tenancy, but if your home has more bedrooms than they need we'll always offer another home suitable for their needs. Certain rules apply – please contact us for more information.

When a tenant dies, someone should contact us as soon as possible to see how we can help. They should also provide a copy of the death certificate, along with details of anyone responsible for dealing with their affairs.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out contents insurance for your home. This will protect your personal possessions in the event of flood, fire, damage or burglary. A leading insurer, Jardine Lloyd Thompson, offers a scheme for Tower Hamlets Homes residents. Please contact them to find out more.

Keys and fobs

You were given keys when you moved into your home. We don't keep spare keys so please arrange to get any spare keys cut that you need.

If you have a door entry system you will also have been given an electronic key fob. If you lose this please contact us as soon as possible for a replacement (charges apply).

If you lock yourself out or lose your keys, we will help you get back in but we do have to charge you the cost of getting in, replacing the lock or repairing any damage.

Laminate flooring

Before you install laminate flooring, please check with us to find out if it's right for your home. If you live in a flat, this type of flooring can cause noise nuisance to your neighbours and we may ask you to remove it if the sound insulation is insufficient.

**Jardine Lloyd Thompson
– Crystal Insurance Scheme**



Phone
0845 601 7007

Home too big?

We'll help you move

Moving home

If you want to move to another rented home with another social landlord in Tower Hamlets you will need to join the housing list. Please contact Tower Hamlets Council's Lettings service for an application form and to find out more.


Once accepted onto the housing list you can bid for homes advertised each week in East End Life, or by using the automated telephone bidding line or the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website.

Moving to a smaller home


If you feel your home is getting too big to manage we can help you move to a smaller home. If you move to a smaller home your rent, council tax and energy costs should also be lower and you may even be able to get a cash grant, as well as help with moving expenses. Please contact us to find out more.

Tower Hamlets Council's Lettings service

 **Phone**
020 7364 2826

 **Email**
lettings@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tower Hamlets Home Seekers

 **Phone**
Automated bidding line
0845 270 2400

 **Website**
www.thhs.org.uk



Pets

A pet that's well-behaved, properly looked-after and safe, can bring pleasure and company to its owner, but please check with us first if you want to keep a pet. As long as it's appropriate for the type of home you live in and will not annoy or frighten other people, we won't usually say no.

Pest control

If you have problems with pests, such as insects, cockroaches, rodents or bed bugs please contact the Council's Pest Control Team. They can give you free advice on treatment and information on how to keep your house free from pests.

Renting out a room

You can rent out a bedroom but please check with us first. We won't usually say no but if we do we'll give you our reasons in writing. It won't affect the rent you pay but it may affect any benefit claims. You can earn a certain amount a year tax free but please think carefully about whether it's right for you.

We cannot act on your behalf if you want someone to leave your home and if you end your tenancy you must make sure no-one is left in your home when you move out.

Safety in the home

For information about keeping you and your neighbours safe in your home check out our *Keeping you safe* leaflet. It covers asbestos, electrical safety, what to do in emergencies, fire, gas and water safety.

Satellite dishes

You are not permitted to erect a satellite dish on your block without written consent from us. Sometimes, you may also be required to obtain planning permission in addition to our written consent.

If you wish to erect a satellite dish on your block then you should contact us for permission. Any dishes put up without written permission will be removed and you will be charged for this.

Council's Pest Control Team



Phone
020 7364 5008

Energy saving tips

**Use energy
-saving light
bulbs**

**Turn your
thermostat
down by 1°C**

**Close your
curtains
at night**

**Put aluminium
foil behind
radiators**

**Visit the
Energy Saving
Trust website
for more
great ideas**

Saving energy and money

Here's some handy tips to help you to help you go green and save money at the same time:

Use energy-saving light bulbs. They save energy, last longer and can save you up to £30 a year. Use these in the lights that are on the most to save the most energy, usually your living room and kitchen.

Turn your central-heating thermostat down by just 1°C. It could save you up to 10% on your fuel bills. Turn down the thermostats on individual radiators.

Close all your curtains at night to prevent heat escaping through your windows. Leave a window open slightly if you have problems with condensation in your home.

If you buy a new appliance, like a fridge, make sure it has a good energy-efficiency rating. 'A' is the best, 'G' is the worst.

Put aluminium foil behind radiators to keep the heat from being lost through the walls. You can buy special foil from DIY shops.

Energy Saving Trust



Website

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk



Squatting and illegal subletting

Sometimes tenants move out and rent their property to another person.

Sometimes people will see an empty property and move in, knowing they shouldn't be living there. These are types of housing fraud known as 'illegal subletting' or 'squatting'.

If you think housing fraud is going on please tell us so we can take action quickly. Your call is treated confidentially and we investigate all reports.

Swapping your home

A Home Swap (also known as a mutual exchange) is when two tenants exchange homes. HomeSwapper helps you find your ideal mutual exchange, searching for potential matches with thousands of other people with tenancies from all over the country. You can get updates and possible matches by email, text message or your on-site account. Registration is free, easy and secure on their website.

Once you've found someone to swap with, you must ask our permission before you move. We won't usually say no but if we do we'll give you our reasons in writing.

It's very important that you arrange to look over the other property before you make a decision to move. When you swap, you must accept the other property as it is left. If you owe rent you won't be able to move until it is paid. Please remember it's illegal to pay anyone to persuade them to exchange tenancies with you.

TV licences

If you own or operate a television in your property, then you are required by law to have a television licence. It is your responsibility to organise this.

Home Swapper



Website

www.homeswapper.co.uk



TV Licence



Website

www.tvlicensing.co.uk



Phone

0844 800 6790

Minicom

0844 800 6778



Want to know more?

Here's how to find out more about the services we provide and what we can offer you.



Talk to your housing advisers

They can answer most of your questions or put you in touch with people who can.



Pick up our range of leaflets and publications

They give you more information on all of our services. You can find these in our reception areas, on our website or by contacting a housing adviser.



Read our service standards

They set out what we do so you know what to expect. We have a service standard for each of the services we provide. These are available on our website and in our offices, or you can ask a member of staff for more information.



Visit our website

You can find lots of information about what we do, how we are performing, and our latest news and information. All of our leaflets and publications are also available to read or print, as well as local information such as neighbourhood inspection timetables.



Check out your newsletters

They contain news and information about our service and are delivered straight to your door.



Look at your local noticeboard

It has information about your Neighbourhood Housing Team, neighbourhood inspection timetables and useful information for where you live.

Translations

This leaflet tells you more about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and some advice on living in your home.

If you need help to understand it or if you have any questions, please contact us by telephone, email or visit one of our offices. We can arrange alternative formats including large print, and provide written information in your own language. We can also offer a meeting with a member of staff and an interpreter.

Translations



Phone
020 7364 5015



Email
contactus
@towerhamletshomes.org.uk

Bengali

এই প্রচারপত্রটি ভাড়াটে হিসেবে আপনার অধিকার এবং দায়িত্ব সম্পর্কে জানাচ্ছে এবং আপনার বাড়ীতে বাস করার বিষয়ে কিছু উপদেশ দিচ্ছে। আপনার যদি এটি বুঝতে কোন সাহায্য লাগে বা কোন প্রশ্ন থাকে তবে দয়া করে আমাদের টেলিফোন, ইমেল করুন বা আমাদের কোন একটি অফিসে আসুন। আমরা আলোচনার জন্য কর্মীদের কোন সদস্য এবং একজন দোভাষীর ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো বা আপনার নিজের ভাষায় লিখিতভাবে তথ্য দিতে পারবো।

Somali

Warsidahan waxa uu kuu sii sharaxayaa xaquuqdaada iyo waajibaadkaaga ijaarka, iyo weliba talo sidii aad ugu noolaan lahayd gurigaaga. Hadii aad kaalmo u baahato si aad u fahanto, ama hadii aad hayso wax su'aalo ah, fadlan nagala soo xiriir telefoonka, email-ka ama soo booqo mid ka mida xafiiskanaga. Waxana aad la kulmi kartaa mid ka mida xubnaha shaqaalaha iyo weliba turjubaan, ama waxa aanu ku siin karnaa macluumaad qoraala oo ku qoran luqadaada.