

# THH Residents' Panel Information Pack

## Introduction

This information pack is for tenants, leaseholders of Tower Hamlets Homes, or their private tenants who are interested in applying to be part of the Tower Hamlets Homes Residents' Panel.

This pack provides information about:

1. About Tower Hamlets Homes
2. About the Residents' Panel
3. Engagement Core Values
4. The Residents' Panel Terms of Reference
5. Recruitment process

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## 1. About Tower Hamlets Homes

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) manages homes and communities owned by Tower Hamlets Council. We are responsible for the day-to-day running of the neighbourhoods - from collecting rent and service charges and carrying out repairs, to improving homes and communal areas. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all our residents by providing excellent housing services and decent homes in decent neighbourhoods

THH is a separate not-for-profit company operating as an arm's length management organisation (or ALMO). We are owned by the Council and managed by a board of directors. The board is made up of thirteen members. They comprise of the following:

- Four councillors.
- Four residents.
- Four independent members.

Our Executive Management team is made up of the Chief Executive, Director of Neighbourhood Services, Director of Finance, Director of Asset Management and Director of Business Transformation. Our Chief Executive reports to the Tower Hamlets Homes Board. Members of our current management team include:

<b>Susmita Sen</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Ann Otesanya</b>	Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Neil Isaac</b>	Director of Finance
<b>Will Manning</b>	Director of Asset Management
<b>Paul Davey</b>	Director of Business Transformation

Our work is governed by a management agreement between us and the Council. The Council remains responsible for making key decisions and policies, such as the setting of rent and service charges, developing policies and strategies and maintaining the Housing Register.

### What we manage

Tower Hamlets Homes	Tower Hamlets Council
Company direction and housing management	Whole borough housing strategy and policy
Tenancy and estate services - area housing management teams and local service teams	Choice based lettings, transfers and allocations
Income collection, company accounts, risk, internal audit	Rent setting, HRA and subsidies
Home ownership services including right to buy and re-sales	Homelessness, supply and demand, short life housing
Community engagement, support for Tenants & Residents Associations and local meetings	Tenant Management Organisation management allowances
Tenant Management Organisation monitoring and support	Housing regeneration and affordable housing developments, housing associations
Major works and decent homes investment	Capital programme forward planning
Planned maintenance and responsive repairs	Clienting the ICT, Housing management and complaints system

## 2. About the Residents' Panel

The Tower Hamlets Homes' Residents' Panel was established in 2010. Made up for volunteers from all walks of life, the panel serves as an advisory body that helps to shape what we do and how we work. Membership of the panel is open to 11 residents who serve three year terms and meet bi-monthly. The panel is usually made up of five tenants, four leaseholds and two private tenants of leaseholders.

The Residents' panel is also responsible for holding Tower Hamlets Homes to account for its performance and the quality of services it provides. They also make recommendations to our Board on how we can improve our services. To date, the Panel has carried out reviews of a number of areas. This has included reviews of our ASB and Resident Engagement services, and the processes for managing complaints and estate inspections.

This is a big challenge, so expect to commit on average the equivalent of one day per month to this important and exciting role. Occasionally, you may be required to attend commit to additional meetings when the Panel is carrying out a scrutiny review.

Our Panel members are not paid, but we'll meet appropriate travel and childcare expenses. You'll also get to meet new people, learn valuable new skills and be a vital part of something big – building a better, brighter Tower Hamlets for everyone.

### What skills do you need to join the Residents' Panel?

All panel members are recruited based on their skills and ability to make the necessary commitment to serve as a member of the Residents' Panel. Although no previous experience is needed, we look for someone who:

- has good communication skills
- has the ability to be objective and can analyse, interpret and question information
- can weigh up issues, make balanced judgements and decisions based on evidence
- thinks local housing services and neighbourhoods can be improved
- has some spare time, energy and ideas to improve services.

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## 3. THH Engagement Core Values

This section outlines the role and behaviour expected of members of all engagement and scrutiny panels operated by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH). It also sets out the spirit of partnership in which residents and THH members of staff should conduct their business.

- Tower Hamlets Homes is committed to promoting respect, equality and diversity. All participants, including observers, are required to act in a courteous manner and show each other respect. Any form of behaviour which goes against the ethos of respect and tolerance will not be accepted.
- Participants must not disclose any confidential information that they may be provided access to during the course of their involvement.
- Members must not use meetings to report repairs, neighbour disputes or any other matters relating to their own personal tenancy or home ownership (unless relevant to the context of a discussion).
- Participants may not represent a political party through their involvement in a THH forum.

## 4. THH Residents' Panel Terms Of Reference

### 1.0 Background

The panel's role is to ensure that the resident voice – in terms of needs, concerns and aspirations – is listened to, heard and acted upon by THH. Members of the panel will scrutinise performance of THH and make recommendations for service improvements.

### 2.0 Powers of the panel

2.1 The panel has the power to commission/request the following:

- Request service managers to report and attend panel meetings
- Invite THH Chief Officers, THH Board members as well as other external experts to panel meetings
- Request for more data from service areas
- Commission focus groups with key resident groups
- Request visits to high performing organisations
- Request expert advice
- Commission mystery shopping
- Commission surveys
- Panel members can request a 15min slot, for a private discussion without the presence of THH staff, at the start or end of the meeting

2.2 The Residents' Panel will work closely with other resident groups.

2.3 The Residents' Panel will agree, on an annual basis, the performance indicators to be presented at meetings.

### 3.0 Membership, recruitment, servicing

The panel will have a maximum of 11 members and will comprise of:

- Five tenants
- Four leaseholders
- Two tenants of leaseholders

3.1 Resident panel members cannot be members of any other formal body within the THH engagement structure, i.e. THH Board.

3.2 Any tenants or residents who are the subject of serious complaints, or have any previous or current history of anti-social behaviour, will not be eligible.

3.3 Residents may attend panel meetings as observers or co-opted members.

3.4 All decisions made by the panel will be with overall majority vote. Observers are excluded from this.

3.5 Agendas and papers will be circulated at least 5 working days prior to panel meetings. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated within 10 working days.

## **4.0 Role of Members**

- 4.1 Residents of the panel act as an advisory body and do not have powers on the operational running of the organisation.
- 4.2 Members must not bring THH into disrepute when undertaking their duties and maintain confidentiality. This includes not sharing or inappropriately using contact details of other members of the panel.
- 4.3 All members of the group will adhere to THH Engagement Core Values. Tower Hamlets Homes has the power to remove any members who are in breach of these values.

## **5.0 Length of Service**

- 5.1 Members will serve for a maximum of 3 years after which they must stand down.
- 5.2 Members may seek an additional term, however this will be considered in line with other applications for membership to the panel.

## **6.0 Frequency of meetings**

- 6.1 The panel will generally meet every two months. The minimum number of meetings will be six per year.
- 6.2 Members that fail to attend two or more consecutive meetings without appropriate notification will be considered to have resigned from their role on the panel.
- 6.3 The quorum for the Residents' Panel is a minimum of 4 members.
- 6.4 Scrutiny reviews will be scheduled as additional sessions to the scheduled Residents' Panel meetings.

## **7.0 Chair of the Panel**

- 7.1 The panel will have a dedicated chair for a period of three years.
- 7.2 The panel will have two vice chairs for a period of three years. The vice chairs will be responsible for chairing meetings in the absence of the chair.

## **8.0 Annual Work Plan**

- 8.1 The panel will have an annual work plan. The work plan will be agreed in quarter four or at an annual away day.

## **9.0 Training and Development**

- 9.1 Panel members may request access to training to support them in their roles. This will be available subject to cost and availability of the training requested.

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## 10.0 Additional support

- 10.1 Support may be provided for child care needs and to residents with mobility issues. Panel members should speak to the Scrutiny and Resident Feedback Team should they require assistance.

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## 5. The Recruitment Process

Individuals interested in joining the Residents' Panel will be asked to complete a short application form and submit this to [scrutiny@thh.org.uk](mailto:scrutiny@thh.org.uk) or post it to the following address:

Tower Hamlets Homes  
Regulatory Assurance  
City Reach  
Greenwich View Place  
London E14 9NN

Once your application has been received it will be considered based on its merits. If shortlisted, you will then be invited to attend as an observer to a meeting of the Residents' Panel. This may then be followed by a short informal discussion with the Chair or Vice Chair before an offer is made.

If offered a place, you will be asked to attend a short induction session where you will be able to ask questions and complete a declaration of interest. You will be formally confirmed as a member of the panel at the following meeting.

We recognise there will be instances where we may have more applications for membership than we can accommodate. Where we are not able to offer you a role we will encourage you get involved in other ways such as participating in some of our service improvement projects.

**If you are unable to complete an application form, or would like to get more information, please email [scrutiny@thh.org.uk](mailto:scrutiny@thh.org.uk)**