

Dec
2016

**Tower Hamlets Housing Options Services
Network Partners Newsletter**

HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING TIMES

**Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service,
Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road,
London E2 0PG**

**Opening hours over the
New Year are;**

**Closed from
Friday 23rd**

December 2016 at 4:00pm

Re-Open

Tuesday 3rd

January 2017 at 9:30am

**An Emergency number over this period can
be obtained from our website,
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk**

Housing Options Service

would like to wish

all our Partners

Seasons Greetings

&

Happy New Year

NETWORK



TOWER HAMLETS LANDLORD FORUM

The Tower Hamlets Landlord / Agents Forum took place on Thursday 20th November at the Professional Development Centre, 229 Bethnal Green Road, E2 6AB. The Forum was very well attended and included speakers;

- Deputy Mayor Sirajul Islam, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing on Tower Hamlets Council
- Richard Blanco, London Representative of the National Landlords Association
- David Tolley, Head of Trading Standards and Environmental Health, LB Tower Hamlets
- Sue Blackwood, Home Office
- Barry Ewing, Principal Environmental Health Officer, LB Tower Hamlets
- Marc Lancaster, Private Sector Policy Officer, LB Tower Hamlets



Below is a summary of what was discussed:

Private landlords provide more homes today than any anyone else in Tower Hamlets. 35 years ago, nearly 90% of homes in Tower Hamlets were rented from the council. Today, social housing provides just 36% of homes in Tower Hamlets: 40% of homes are rented from a private landlord.

Improving all parts of the private rented housing has become a political priority for the council, and Deputy Mayor Sirajul Islam, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, opened a busy landlords' forum on 10 November. Fifty four delegates - a mix of private landlords, local independent agencies and larger agencies – took part in the forum at the council's Professional Development Centre.

Richard Blanco from the National Landlords Association considered landlords' business strategy in the face of tax changes and new Buy to Let mortgage regulation before moving on to cover one of the fastest-moving years of housing law I can remember.



David Tolley, Head of the council's Trading Standards and Environmental Health service talked through and took some lively questions on the new and existing Licensing Schemes in Tower Hamlets.

The Home Office explained the new "Right to Rent" checks that landlords and agents must now make on tenants – and the need to meet these obligations without unlawful discrimination



In Tower Hamlets between 100 and 150 fires break out in privately rented homes every year. A fire can occur in any home, no matter how much care you take as a landlord. If the worst does happen – and sadly it does happen – you as a landlord or managing agent will have to convince investigators and ultimately the courts that you have done enough to comply with the law. Environmental Health Officer Barry Ewing shared his extensive experience of investigating fires in rented properties and helping to make properties safe against fire.

Over lunch, delegates talked with the speakers along with staff from across the Council including housing advice & options, licensing, housing benefit, environmental health, temporary accommodation procurement, disabled facilities grants, empty homes, trading standards and housing policy.

The forum was not without its hitches – most notably, Hackney council had not been aware of our forum and arranged a landlord's forum on the same day, significantly reducing the number of landlords who could attend. Nevertheless, feedback was encouraging: 100% of attendees said that overall they were satisfied with the Forum with 80% rating it excellent or good.

Mayor John Biggs has made it very clear that he wants to support private renters. This also means supporting private landlords and agents. We want our landlord and agents forums to be a part of doing that. Feedback from attendees suggests that there is a clear need for the Council to run a forum focusing on changes in housing law and regulations and updates on the council's approach.

For the next two years we will run three forums a year, four months apart: an annual headline forum with multiple presentations and two more discursive 'update' forums between these. Additionally, we will hold one-off targeted training events open to landlords and agents in the borough.

We will hold our next forum on 8 March 2017 between 5.00 and 6.30pm at the Town Hall, and we will be holding fire safety training in late April 2017.



If you missed the forum and would like details on the topics covered, if you would like to suggest topics for the next forum, or if you have ideas for future training sessions, please contact Marc Lancaster, Private Sector Housing Policy Officer, on 020 7364 6040 or marc.lancaster@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Tower Hamlets Homefinder



Landlords and Managing Agents Needed!

Up to **£4000**
for 2+ bed
properties

Up to **£2500**
for 1 bed
properties

- No more letting agency fees
- No lengthy contract tie-ins
- Higher rents and rent guarantees
- Hassle free lettings with on-going support
- A choice of service levels



Tower Hamlets Homefinder is a Council service which provides two generous schemes for Landlords and Managing Agents

The financial incentive scheme provides cash payments for landlords to accept council-vetted tenants for assured short-hold tenancies.

Our rent guarantee scheme offers the reassurance that rent is collected by us whatever the circumstances of the tenant, and you receive a council-backed guaranteed competitive monthly income.

Open to landlords with any number or size of properties, that meet the council's minimum standards

**Cash incentives
or rent
guarantees
available for
landlords**

To find out more contact
020 7364 7298 / 020 7364 7286
or email

accommodation.procurement@towerhamlets.gov.uk



AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Last month, Kath Dane, Street Population Co-ordinator in HOST was presented with an award by the Home Office in recognition of excellence partnership working. On behalf of the Council, Kath leads on tackling rough sleeping in the borough. She is passionate about ensuring that everyone receives the right support and accommodation option so no one is left living in the dangerous and harmful conditions which are associated with rough sleeping.

Tower Hamlets works with the Home Office to ensure those who are not entitled to benefits and have no accommodation options in the UK return to their home countries. HOST commissions TH SORT outreach services to provide vulnerable non-UK national rough sleepers with the right support to return home safely and with dignity.

Kath says 'In Tower Hamlets, tackling and preventing rough sleeping is complex and requires a range of partners and solutions to ensure no one dies on our streets. Tower Hamlets has an excellent track record of working in partnership to help rough sleepers rebuild their lives.'



Tower Hamlets Rough sleepers count

This year's annual street count took place in the early hours of Friday 25th November. Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service had a large numbers of volunteers offering there services for the night, without the volunteers and there continued support, the street count would not be able to take place.

The final count of rough sleepers on the night was 11. **This is an excellent figure.** It demonstrates the brilliant continuous work that is carried out all year round by the commissioned rough sleeping services: TH SORT outreach and Providence Row day service, the commissioned hostel providers, enforcement partners including the Met's Partnership Taskforce, Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers, and ASB officers, the community mental health team through their secondment to TH SORT, the council's Housing Options services dedicated members of staff, and the unpaid unsung heroes – the teams of volunteers across all our services!



London Borough of Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service Customer Satisfaction Survey

A full document containing the summary of the results from our annual Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS), conducted in December 2015 is available on our Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service website.

Below are some of the findings from this years survey.

- We received 225 responses, our best yet - and another welcome improvement in service user engagement levels.
- 74% of respondents said when calling the Housing Options Service they were dealt with respectfully.
- 79% of our customers found the bidding system easy
- 86% of our customers stated they knew who their housing officer was.
- 68% of our customers in temporary accommodation knew who their Managing agent was
- 52% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the repairs carried out in their property
- 63% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service they received , this is a 10% increase from the previous survey.



for full results and summary please click onto this link,
[“Customer Satisfaction Survey Summary Report”](#)

Congratulations to the Housing Options Service Housing Advice Team

Housing Advice passed the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) audit with flying colours. The team have been 'quality mark' assessed, passed and re-certified to give Quality Standard advice to the public. Tower Hamlets is one of only two boroughs whose Housing Advice Service has been awarded the AQS.

Janet Slater Service Manager Options and Assessments echoed this saying

“A big WELL DONE to you all for your contribution to the Housing Advice Service passing the inspection with flying colours.

We will receive the full report in due course, with the inspector indicating only one minor area requiring improvement.

The team has come a long way in the last 18 months with the development of strong partnership working, personal and professional development opportunities and tight, focussed team work.

The inspector had particular praise for the regular appraisals and supervision conducted by Sandra Awotesu (Housing Advice team leader) and thanked Debra Woznicki (Admin Officer) in her absence for all the work on updating the manual and providing the statistics on attendance, absence and performance.

All the team impressed with their detailed case file notes, enthusiasm and professional approach.

The accreditation will last for two years and we are looking forward to displaying the AQS certificate in a prominent place when it is received.

Thank you all and congratulations”.





TOWER HAMLETS HOMESEEKERS HAS A NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE

Simplified search and bid features - order your results by cost and distance

•
Listing homes available for rent from 22 partner housing providers

•
New residents guide to finding a home and accessing support

Let us help you.

Just ask Mo



Ask Mo (My Options) is a new online tool that provides quick, easy, 24-hour access to help and information about housing in Tower Hamlets. It can also help to point you towards other support and services available to you, including:

- debt management
- job opportunities and training
- child care options
- money management
- legal advice
- help with utility bills



To visit our Ask Mo website, please go to:
<https://towerhamlets.ehodirect.org.uk>

or [click here](#)



"We recognise that to deliver an excellent service to customers we need to invest in our staff"

TOWER HAMLETS

HOUSING OPTIONS

**SERVICE WILL NOW BE
CLOSED**

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

FOR TRAINING AND STAFF

DEVELOPMENT DOORS

WILL OPEN AT 1:00PM



OPENING TIMES

MONDAY 9:30AM - 4:00PM

TUESDAY 9:30AM - 4:00PM

WEDNESDAY 1:00PM - 4:00PM

THURSDAY 9:30AM - 4:00PM

FRIDAY 9:30AM - 4:00PM

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

WE ARE CLOSED

ADDRESS;

**ALBERT JACOB HOUSE,
62 ROMAN ROAD, LONDON**

E2 0PG

Create a Healthier Home with a FREE Home Energy Visit

Cold homes are a major contributor to ill health and can exacerbate a range of health issues including respiratory and circulatory problems. In 2014/15 there were an estimated 43,900 excess winter deaths in the UK.

In 2015 Groundwork London launched WARMTH (Warm Homes Agency Referral Method To deliver Health), designed to tackle this issue in a holistic way by keeping the resident's health and wellbeing at the heart of the service.

During the home visit all client needs are assessed, advice and guidance is given and small energy efficiency measures are installed.

Additionally referrals can be made to other local, free services. These include;

- Debt advice
- Fire safety checks
- Health/well-being services
- Help with isolation
- Handyman

WARMTH supports those who struggle to pay their fuel bills such as:

- People with multiple health issues
- Young person on a low income (16-25)
- People aged over 65
- People suffering from respiratory diseases
- People suffering from cardiovascular disease
- People who have severe mental illness or dementia
- Households on low incomes with children under age five

Are you finding it hard to pay your energy bills? Would you like a free benefits check? Do you think you could benefit from a free home visit?

If so please contact us.

WARMTH@groundwork.org.uk or call 0300 365 5003



Camden



Ealing



London Borough
of Hounslow



TOWER HAMLETS



Sutton



Lewisham



GROUNDWORK
CHANGING PLACES



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

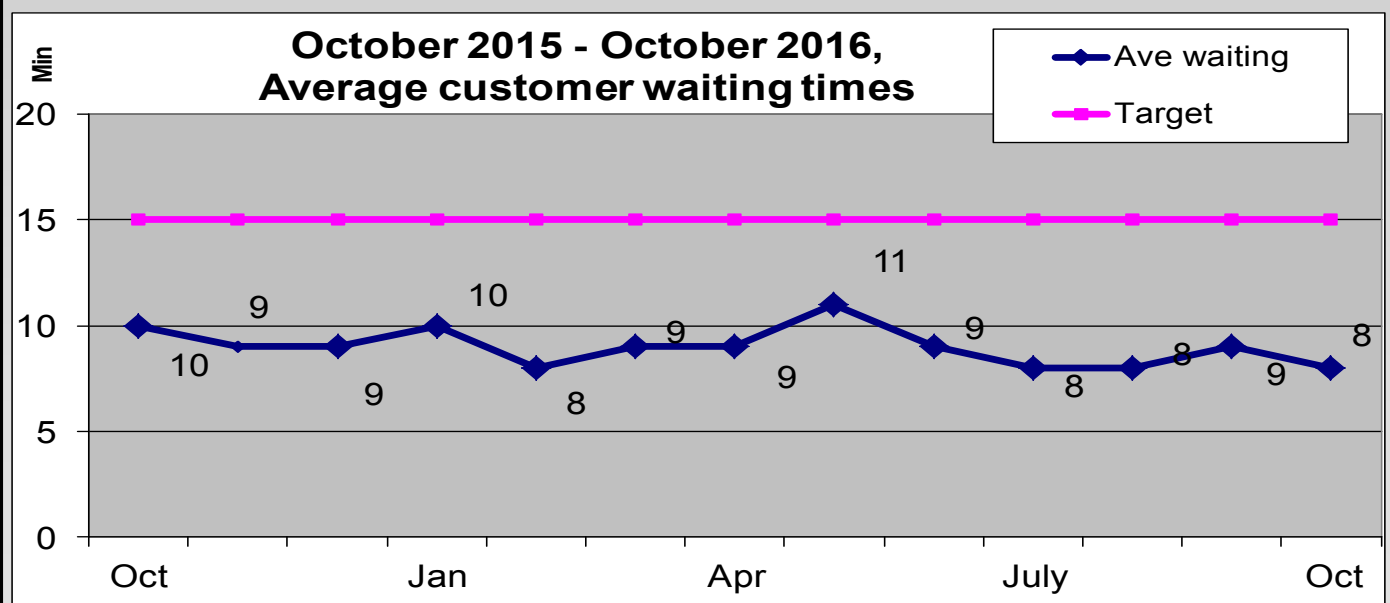
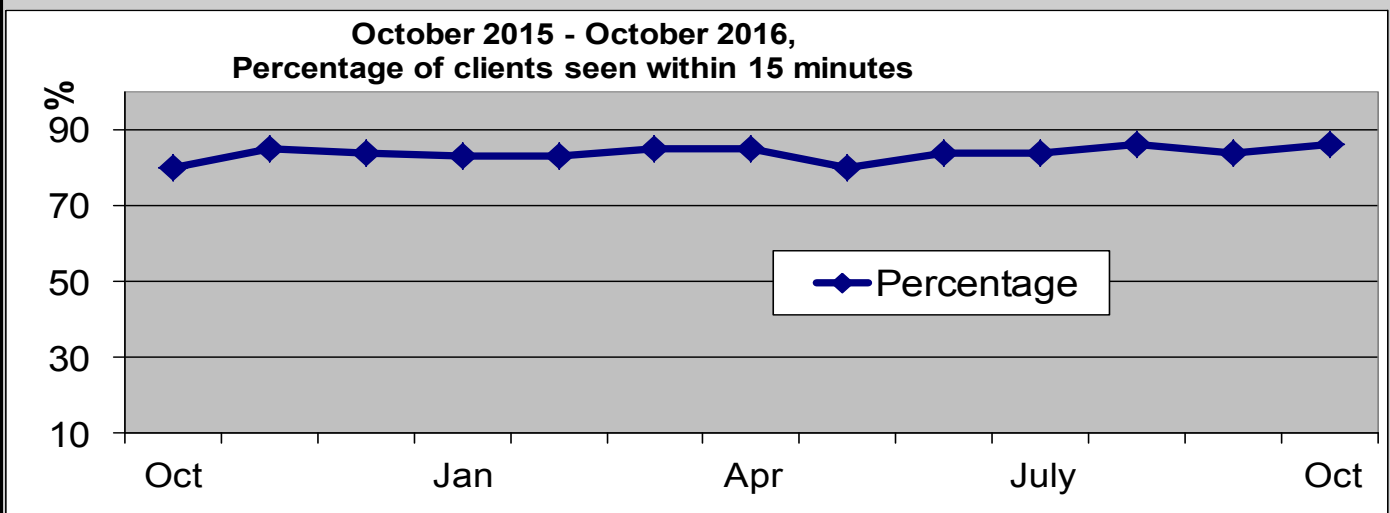
The Housing Options Services are still improving their waiting times.

Our target is to keep our customers waiting for no more than 15 minutes, within the last 12 months the Housing Options Services waiting time Stats are now on target, we are now reaching our 15 minutes target levels.

As you can see from the graphs below that we have made an improvement over the last year. We aim to keep these high standards and continue to keep waiting times to a minimum.

A full list of the Housing Options Statistic can be found on our website, click on the link below;

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/housing/housing_options_service/housing_and_homelessness_publication.aspx



NOTICE BOARD

FREE BUDGET WORKSHOPS

Tower Hamlets Housing Advice service in partnership with homeless charity Barnados are running a series of free workshops on Budgeting skills. The workshop is to help participants acquire budgeting skills and encourage financial sustainability especially for tenants affected by benefit cap and those who require the skills needed to take control of their finances



The workshop is held every month and runs for three hours month at Albert Jacobs House.

Please contact:

Stephen Ayoola on 020 7364 3558

if you are interested in attending this workshop.

We would love our Partner Organisations to get involved in future editions of this newsletter, so if you have any ideas or suggestions for content please contact us.

All previous editions of the Network Newsletter can be found on our website click on the link below to view.
<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/housing.aspx>

The best way to contact the Housing Options Service is via our generic email box at homeless@towerhamlets.gov.uk

CONTACT ME

If you have any stories or information you wish to have published in the Network Newsletter please contact me

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