

Dec 2016

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Services

CONGRATULATIONS

to

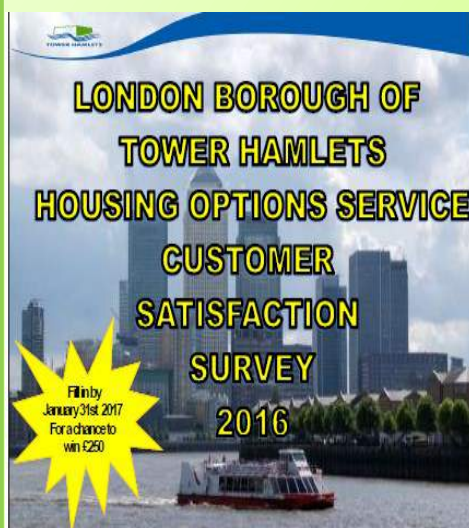
MRS NURUN NAHAR BEGUM



who won our prize draw and received £250.00 shopping vouchers for completing the last Tower Hamlets Housing Options Customer Survey.

For your chance to win this year then please complete the 2016 survey that will be posted to you in the near future.

INTOUCH





HomefinderUK

Immediately Available Homes Nationwide

Homefinder UK is a national housing mobility scheme which brings social housing applicants, properties and landlords together, all in one portal.

With a fast growing supply of properties nationwide, this scheme helps tenants and homeless households, who want or need to move, to find a home that better matches their household size and personal and financial circumstances.

Homefinder UK offers the following type of schemes/properties:

- Immediately available social housing properties
- Mutual exchange
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Retirement / Sheltered housing
- Right to move - moving for employment purposes

Case Management Service

Homefinder UK offers personalised support to applicants considering a long-distance move. Whatever help you need with finding the right social housing property, the Homefinder UK Case Management Team can help. Whether that means sourcing the property for you in your chosen location or helping you with the registration process, no task is too big, or too small!

How do I find out which properties are available?

Properties are made available by landlords and advertised on the [Homefinder UK website](#). They also offer mutual exchanges through House Exchange and access to the government's Homeswap Direct service. By registering on Homefinder UK, applicants are able to see all immediately available homes and mutual exchanges.

Tower Hamlets Council has joined the scheme to offer homeless households and tenants more choice and opportunity to find suitable homes. Homefinder UK is not run by the council.

To find out more about the scheme and to register, please go to www.homefinderuk.org

Contact email: enquiries@homefinderuk.org

For more information contact the council's housing options team.



The Benefit Cap is coming, but
we can help!

Visit now www.homefinderuk.org



Benefit Cap

From Autumn 2016, the government is reducing the benefit cap which caps the amount of benefits out-of-work working-age families can receive. This means that many households who are claiming out-of-work benefits will become subject to the cap for the first time, and may have difficulty affording their rent.

The new weekly benefit cap is outlined below

New weekly benefit cap



You have been contacted by your council because you are amongst those who will be affected. The cap is implemented by cutting the amount of housing benefit paid to affected households. The Council has helped to cushion the impact of the benefit cap by subsidising the rents of affected households through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). Unfortunately the money allocated by the Government is not enough to meet demand which means if affected households in temporary accommodation are not able to find work the Council will have to take steps to move them to cheaper homes, which in most cases will be outside Tower Hamlets, and in many, outside of London altogether.

Tower Hamlets Council joined Homefinder UK to help find affordable Council and Housing Association properties

in parts of the UK where there is much greater supply and lower rents. Homefinder UK is a national mobility scheme that helps households who want or need to move to find a home that better matches their household size and personal and financial circumstances.

Should you be willing to settle permanently out of London, Homefinder UK staff will also provide you their Case management support. This could mean anything from helping to identify best areas for you to move to, to sourcing a property in a low demand housing area.

Households in temporary accommodation who are affected by the benefit cap and do not wish to settle permanently out of the Borough will be found cheaper temporary accommodation as the Council cannot continue to subsidise their rents indefinitely.

The Council is providing support to people who wish to find work. If you are interested in receiving help with employment, please let your Housing Officer know

To find out more information and to register for FREE, go to www.homefinderuk.org. Contact Homefinder UK team on 0207 619 9705

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 HOMESEEKERS HAS A NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE

Launching Monday 28th November from 6pm

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

Please note that the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website will not be available between 9am-5pm on Monday 28th November

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>

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.

Your 2016 Customer Satisfaction Survey should have been posted to you can you please find the time to complete as we value our customer feedback.

Below are some of the findings from this year's 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”.





IMPORTANT:

CHANGES TO RENT PAYMENT

Please note that the Council has changed its bank account and you may need to update your records.

You should change your LBTH payee details immediately if you pay your rent by:

- Standing Order
- Online banking through your own bank
- Telephone banking through your own bank

The new details are:

Bank	National Westminster Bank
Branch	161 Bow Road, London, E3 2SG
Account Name	LBTH (Rent Collection)
Sort Code	60-03-19
Account Number	75667177

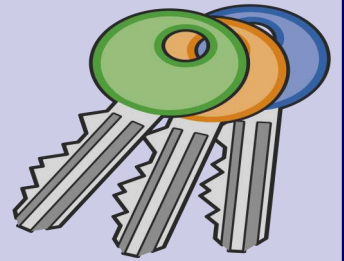
You do not need to take any action if you pay your rent by:

- Telephone payment direct to an officer at the Housing Options Service
- The Council's 24 hour automated payment line
- Paypoint
- Post Office
- Direct Debit
- By post to the Cashiers Office



Please do not use the old bank account as your payment may be delayed or rejected.

KEYS THAT NEED TO BE HANDED BACK OVER CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR



Our temporary accommodation clients that are due to return keys over the Christmas and New year period should return them directly to their managing agents as they are still open over the Christmas holiday. The tenant should contact the managing agent to find out the dates that they will be open so that keys can be returned to them.

Keys should not be left in the property unless instructed by the managing agents.

If the tenant is unable to return the keys to the agent then they need to return it to us before 12pm on the 3rd January. If the keys are not returned before 12pm then they will be liable for the charges.

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 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

The Housing Options Services Statistics

See below the Housing Options Service statistics for 2016.

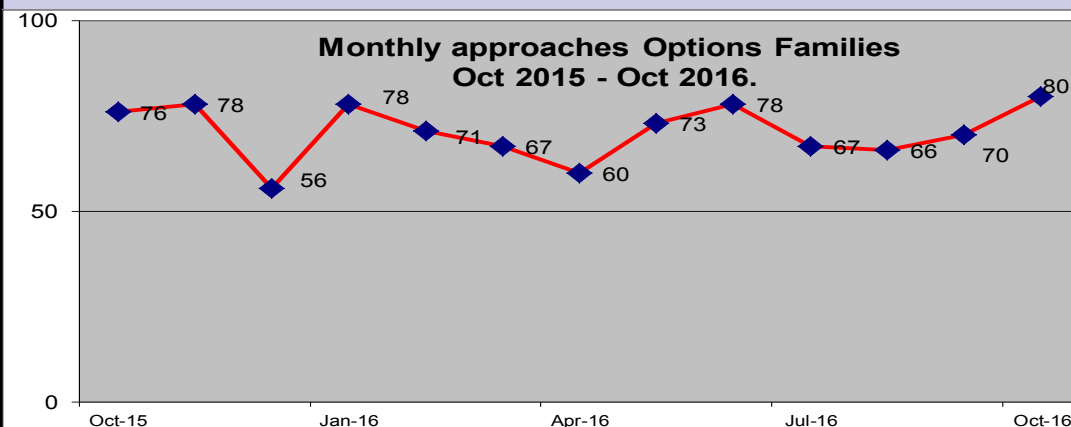
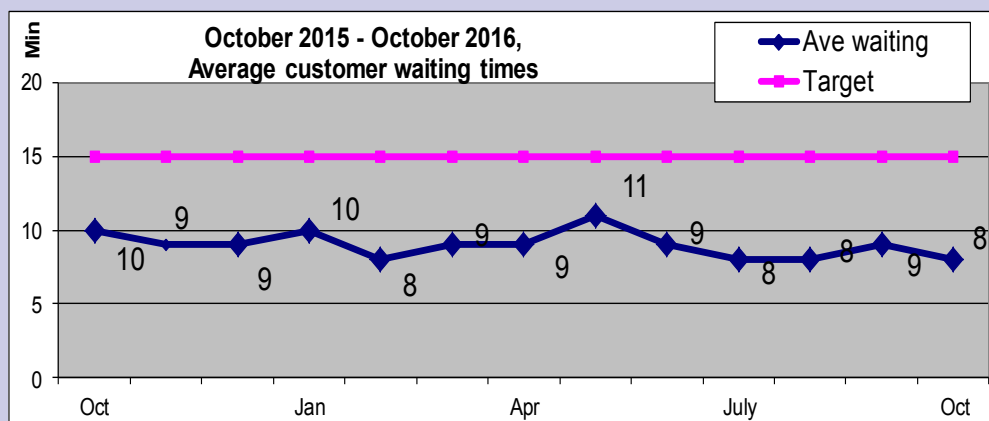
A full list of the Housing Options Statistic can be found on our website, click on the link below;

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/housing/housing_options_service/housing_and_homelessness_publi.aspx

These stats include;

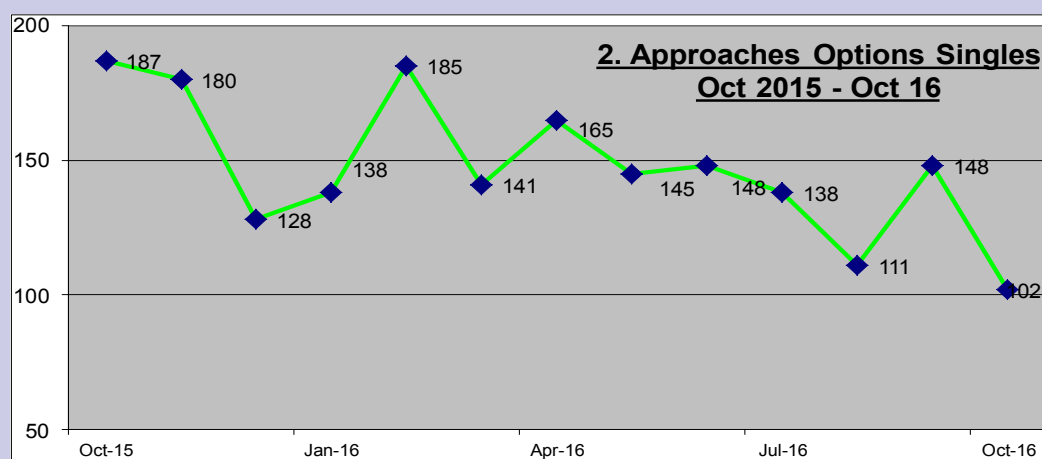
1. Average monthly customer waiting times

- Waiting times – the target is for 95% of our customers to be seen within 15 minutes.



2. Approaches made to our Housing Options Service Family team.

3. Approaches made to our Housing Options Service singles team.



<http://www.ideastoreonlinedirectory.org>

CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS
TO THE WEBSITE



idea

Library Learning Information

Search for information about health services, local groups, clubs and organisations with the
Idea Store Online Directory



**SIGN VIDEO IS
AVAILABLE AT OUR
ALBERT JACOB HOUSE,
62 ROMAN ROAD,
LONDON E2 0PG OFFICE.**

**FOR FURTHER DETAILS
PLEASE CONTACT THE
BUSINESS SUPPORT
TEAM ON 0207 364 7262.**

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

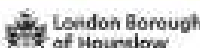
WARMTH supports those who struggle to pay their fuel bills such as:

- 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



Tower Hamlets energy services 2016

Click on Tools to convert files to PDF.

Please note, this list is not exhaustive. It is correct as of August 2016, but some projects have time-limited funding.

Utility debts and grants for white goods

East End Energy Fit, Bromley by Bow Centre



eastendenergyfit@bbbc.org.uk

020 8709 9745

Support to understand:

- Bills
- Meters
- Heating controls
- How to switch supplier
- How to save energy and reduce bills

Empower, Bromley by Bow Centre



empower@bbbc.org.uk

020 8709 9745

Home visits for vulnerable residents including:

- Advice on home energy management
- Installing small energy efficiency measures
- Referring to further support

WARMTH, Groundwork



WARMTH@groundwork.org.uk

0300 365 5003

<https://groundwork.partnerlogin.org/external/webforms/7>

Access to better deals from energy suppliers

Tower Hamlets Energy Community Power



Search: "Tower Hamlets Energy Community Power" in a search engine or the LBTH website

SAVE MONEY ON ENERGY BILLS

Come to our regular Energy Advice sessions for help with:

- Comparing energy providers and switching
- Understanding your bills, meter and heating controls
- Simple ways to reduce your energy costs

First and third Tuesday of the month, 10:00 – 12:00, at the Bromley by Bow Centre. For more information, call 0208 7099745, ask the BBBC Advice Team or Email empower@bbbc.org.uk



empower

Left in the dark?



Out in the cold?

Caught high and dry?



East End Energy Fit

is here to help you if you are finding it difficult to pay your gas and electricity bills.

We can reduce your bills, set up payment plans, apply to clear your debt and help you purchase essential household items.

Project funded by:
The British Gas energy trust

For more information:

Contact us on 020 8709 9745 or 020 8709 9847 or email us at eastendenergyfit@bbbc.org.uk

Address: Bromley by Bow Centre,
St Leonard's Street, London E3 3BT

Website: www.bbbc.org.uk



The Bromley by Bow Centre
is a Registered Charity -
1013347 141362

NOTICE BOARD



**Housing Options Service Christmas and
New Year opening times at
Albert Jacob House:**

**We will close on
Friday 23rd December at 4pm
and reopen on
Tuesday 3rd January 2017 at 9:30am.**

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

**We wish all our customers
Season Greetings and a
Happy New Year.**

CONTACT ME

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

**Jamie Jackson
Business Support Team
Housing Options Service
Albert Jacob House
62 Roman Road
London E2 0PG
Tel: 0207 3647262**

Jamie.jackson@towerhamlets.gov.uk

All previous editions of the
In Touch Newsletter can be found
on our website

click on the link below to view.

[http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/
lgnl/housing.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/housing.aspx)

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