

August
2013

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service Partners Newsletter

NETWORK

Homeless Statement May 2013

Dear Partners,

The Council recently adopted the 2013 Homeless Statement and if you would like to read this document it can be found at the following link;

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/851-900/867_consultation/homelessness_statement.aspx

To encourage you to consider this document we thought it might help to repeat the comments of the Mayor that form the Foreword to this important piece of work:-

“As Mayor of Tower Hamlets tackling housing need is a personal priority of mine. Having somewhere suitable to live is essential to residents’ wellbeing, young people’s attainment and quality of life.

Local partners have made considerable progress in improving services and reducing homelessness in the borough. Hundreds of families have been prevented from being homeless, there are fewer people sleeping rough for two consecutive nights and the use of temporary accommodation to house homeless households has reduced.

Despite these successes, we face significant challenges that will affect housing need and our ability to respond to these needs. They include unprecedented changes to welfare support, social housing reform, continued economic uncertainties, and government cuts to services.

I am concerned that these changes will mean many of our poorest families and vulnerable households will see their incomes reduced, making it harder for them to meet their housing and other living costs. This will push many families into poverty and increase housing need.

In light of these challenges, Tower Hamlets aims to ensure that local services are best placed to continue to tackle and prevent homelessness by focusing on four key themes:

- **Homeless prevention and tackling the causes of homelessness**
- **Access to affordable housing options**
- **Children, families and young people**
- **Vulnerable adults**

I look forward to working with local agencies to deliver these objectives and continue to improve the quality of life for all local people”

Mayor Lutfur Rahman

Partner Survey 2013 Results

Overview

The Housing Options Service Partner Survey was conducted over a 4 week period (April 2013), to monitor the Partner perception of the Housing Options Service. It was sent to over 300 Partners including RSLs, Landlords, Letting Agents and other key organisations.

We received feedback from 63 partner organisations, up from 45 last year. The weighted results, (based on the number of responses to each question), are summarised below.

Findings

Contact Frequency & History

We wanted to find out how well we dealt with our partners' telephone calls. These were the results;

- 78% of our partners were satisfied or very satisfied with the time taken to answer their calls.
- 82% of our partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our overall telephone service. This was a small improvement from the previous survey when the total was 80%.

We received comments on how to improve this service and we plan to put contact details into our next partner newsletter. ????

Correspondence

We wanted to gain an idea of our partners impression of our typical performance when they write, fax or e-mail us

- 73% of our partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our response time to correspondence.
- 50% of our partners said we could improve and we are looking at the suggestions put forward to maintain our high standards.

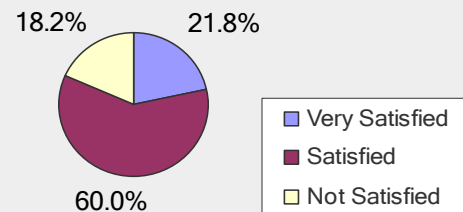
We aim to be paperless and will be publicising our generic email address in this newsletter and other publications.

Meeting You

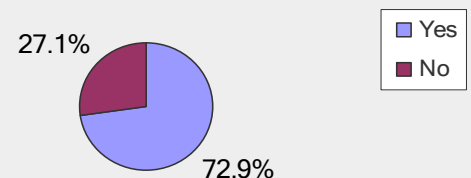
We wanted to find out how well we deal with our Partners when we meet them, with or without clients present.

- 69% of the Partners that took part in this Survey had met with the Housing Options Service; 92% of these were satisfied or very satisfied with how they were treated.
- 87% of our Partners that had visited Albert Jacob House were satisfied or very satisfied with our reception area.
- We received 18 comments from our Partners on how we can improve our service when we meet face to face. We are taking these comments into consideration to improve further in future.

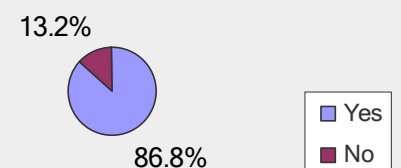
Overall, how well do we deal with your calls



Overall, when you write, email or fax us, do you feel our response time is satisfactory?



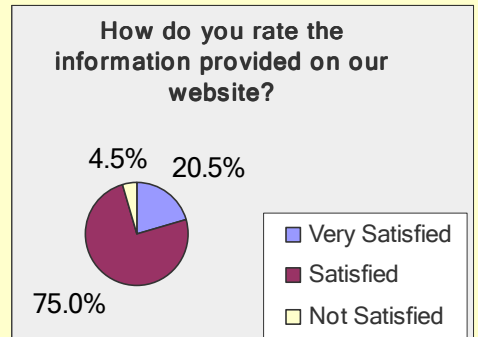
If you came to Albert Jacob House, were you satisfied with our reception area?



Website and Network Partner newsletter

We recently updated our Housing Options Service Website and have been sending our Network Partner newsletter out for over 5 years. We wanted feedback on how to improve both.

- Our Website had a very positive feedback with 96% of our Partners very satisfied or satisfied with the information we provide on our website and 98% thought we could not improve in this area. This contrasts well with the 2012 survey, when 13% of our Partners were not satisfied with our website.
- 98% of our Partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our Network newsletter.

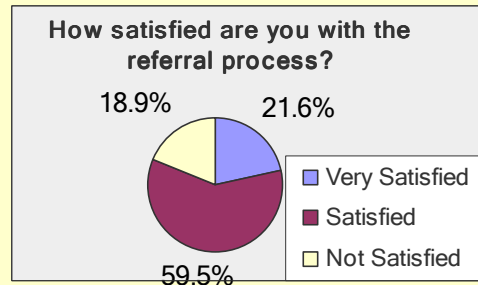


In keeping with such high standards we aim to continue to work closely with our partners to encourage their contributions to maintain a high level of service in these areas.

Referring Clients

It is important that we gain information regarding the referrals we receive from our partners and the referrals we make to our partners.

- 70% of the Partners that answered this survey said we referred clients to them. With 0-20 referrals being the most common amount over a 12 month period.
- 52% of the Partners that answered this survey said they referred clients to us. 0-20 referrals was also the most popular amount over a 12 month period.
- 81% said that they are satisfied or very satisfied with our referral process.



We received nine recommendations for improvements which we will look at and take into account when reviewing our referral processes.

Making a Complaint

- Only 15% of our Partners have made a complaint regarding the Housing Options Service.

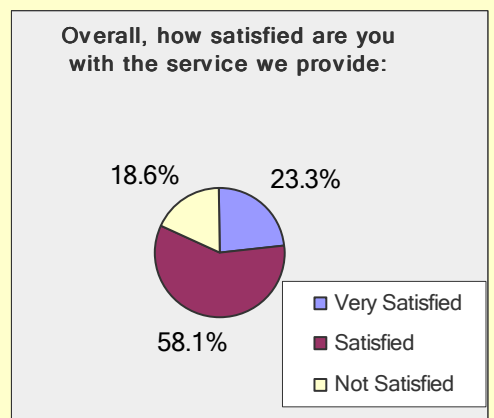
From our previous survey we found that our Partners didn't know how to make a complaint to the Housing Options Service so we have published our complaint details in the Network newsletter and on our website.

Overall Satisfaction

From the 63 Partners that took part in this Survey the overall Satisfaction level of the Service was 81%.

What's next?

We have had a high level of satisfaction through out this survey but we understand as a service that improvements are on-going and we will always strive to meet the high demands placed on our service.





Tower Hamlets Landlord Forum Thursday 6th June 2013

We had a great turnout again at the Tower Hamlets Landlord Forum. George Denton Ashley, Team Manager Options and Prevention (Families) opened proceedings and gave an introduction.

Richard Blanco from the National Landlords Association gave us a very interesting talk on the “Top ten challenges facing London Landlords”.

We then broke for lunch and Landlords had a chance to network and talk to Tower Hamlets staff members.

After the break, Paul Shamplina, a founder member of Landlord Action gave us an insight on “How to avoid a bad tenant” which went down very well in the room.

Next came a presentation from Richard Murrell from Tower Hamlets Planning Department who talked to Landlords about the service they provide and also answered any questions Landlords and Agents had regarding this topic.

Lastly we enjoyed a presentation from the Tower Hamlets Benefit Team who updated the audience on the Government’s imminent Welfare Reforms and the impact of the Benefit Cap.



The next Tower Hamlets Landlord Forum will take place;



LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS LANDLORDS/AGENTS FORUM

DATE: WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2013

VENUE: ROOM RR101
ALBERT JACOB HOUSE
62 ROMAN ROAD
LONDON
E2 0PG

TIME: 13:00 P.M - 16.30 P.M

The Forum will look at ways in which Tower Hamlets Council and Private Sector can work together.

CATERING WILL BE PROVIDED FOR THIS EVENT AND WE VERY MUCH LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU.

TO BOOK YOUR PLACE FOR THIS EVENT, PLEASE CONTACT US;

GEOFFREY NEVETT OR NOELLA LING
TOWER HAMLETS HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE
62 ROMAN ROAD
LONDON E2 0PG
TEL; 020 7364 3558

EMAILS; Geoffrey.Nevett@towerhamlets.gov.uk Noella.ling@towerhamlets.gov.uk

IF YOU ARE A LETTING AGENT, PLEASE ENSURE THAT DETAILS OF THE FORUM ARE SENT TO ALL YOUR LANDLORDS, THANKS.



The next Tower Hamlets Landlord Accreditation Course will take place;

London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS)

To become accredited, a Landlord must complete a one day development course.

Tower Hamlets Housing Advice Service is holding Development Courses for 'LLAS'.

DATE: WEDNESDAY 16th OCTOBER 2013

TIME: 9:15 a.m to 16:30 p.m

**VENUE: ROOM 101
62 ROMAN ROAD
LONDON
E2 0PG**

COST: £79.90 (inc VAT) Only applicable on line registrations this is a 20% discount on the normal cost of £110 (inc VAT)

HOW TO BOOK: Apply on line at – www.londonlandlords.org.uk

By Telephone:

Jessica Alomankeh – LLAS Coordinator
Environmental Health, London Borough Of Camden
Email: LLAS@camden.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7974 1970

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT COURSES DATES WILL BE ANNOUNCED

CONTACT:

NOELLA LING
Email: Noella.ling@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7364 3578

We will refund your fees if you let us have your property to let to the number of families who are registered on Tower Hamlets Rent Deposit Scheme.

LANDLORDS AND MANAGING AGENTS NEEDED!

Tower Hamlets Homefinder is a new service being launched by the council which provides two schemes for landlords and Managing Agents.

The Council's financial incentive scheme provides a one-off, non-refundable cash payment for Council-vetted nominations for Assured Shorthold Tenancies – and this incentive payment is just that – It doesn't need to be paid back!

With the forthcoming introduction of Universal credit our rent guarantee scheme offers the reassurance that the rent is collected by us whatever the circumstances of the tenant and you will receive a guaranteed competitive monthly income backed by the council.

Tower Hamlets Homefinder is open to landlords with any number of properties, of any size, as long as they meet the council's minimum standards

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

Cash incentives or rent guarantees available for landlords

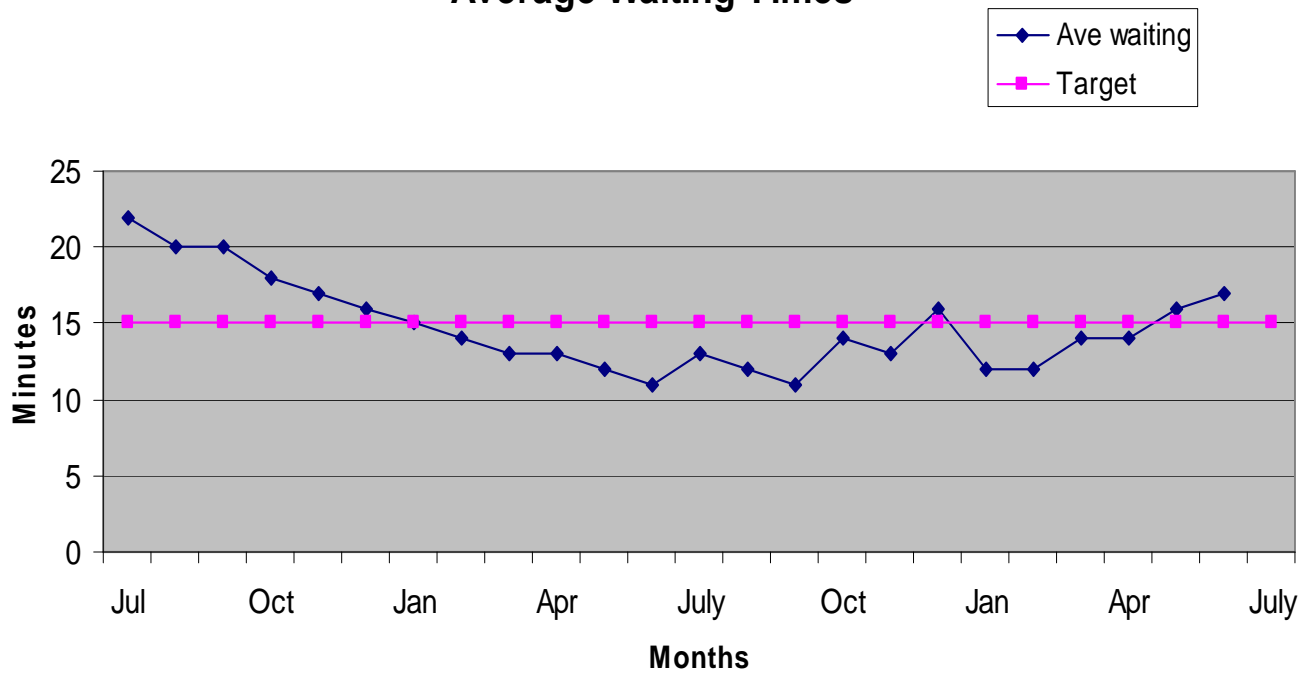
To find out more contact 0207 364 7298 or Email Mohon.Miah@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The Housing Options Service is still improving waiting times.

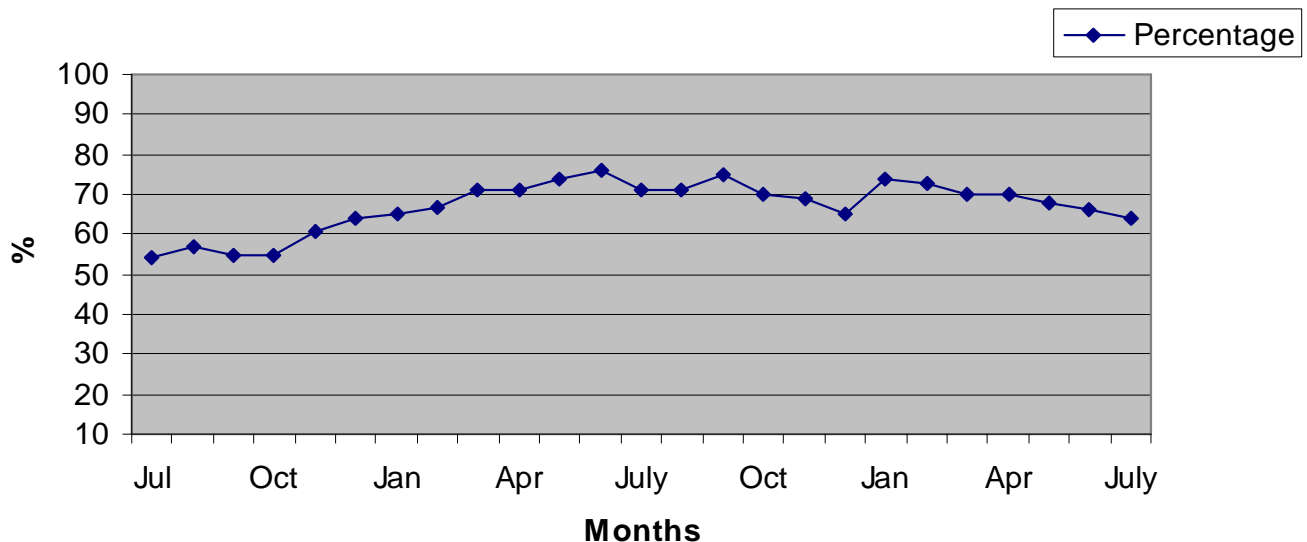
Our target is to see clients within 15 minutes and we are now reaching that target.

As you can see from the graphs below we have been steadily improving each month, we aim to maintain these high standards and continue to keep waiting times to a minimum.

Average Waiting Times



Percentage of clients seen within 15 minutes waiting time



T.H.E. Community Power

T.H.E. Community Power is an energy co-operative run by Tower Hamlets Council, which was launched by Mayor Rahman. The scheme is designed to secure a cheaper energy deal for you, and for households in fuel poverty – where 10 per cent or more of their income is spent on keeping it warm. The scheme was the first of its kind in the country and since its launch, other boroughs have either replicated it or established similar programmes. In addition to cheaper deals, it also offers a range of other holistic services including free and impartial advice on grants, insulation, fuel debt, and easy energy efficiency measures to help reduce your energy bills.

By providing your energy details, you can express an interest in the scheme, but you are not obliged to switch supplier. Your registration will be added to a pool of LBTH households and other boroughs across London that will go to auction. During these auctions, leading energy companies are invited to put forward their most competitive rates. Once a supplier secures a deal, personalised offer letters outlining the savings will either be posted or emailed to you. You then have the option to switch, if you

choose to. T.H.E Community Power has already had two successful auctions, generating an average saving of £124, and is holding another auction on 16th October 2013.

T.H.E Community Power Team is in the process of organising a number of road shows and events leading up to the next auction to promote the scheme and to help residents to sign-up. As you have nothing to lose, why not sign up online, by visiting <http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/energy> or by calling our dedicated free phone number, 0800 5088364. Before doing so, please ensure you have your energy bill to hand.

Want to reduce your energy bill?

**T.H.E.
COMMUNITY
POWER**

bringing you cheaper energy

Join our campaign for cheaper energy:

Freephone 0800 508 8364

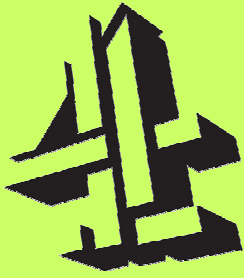
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/energy

T.H.E Community Power is an Energy Co-operative set up to bring you a cheaper energy deal.

Members can access free and impartial advice on grants, insulation and fuel debt, to help reduce fuel bills.

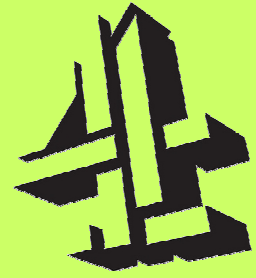


**LUTFUR
RAHMAN** | MAYOR OF
TOWER HAMLETS



CHANNEL 4

DOCUMENTARY



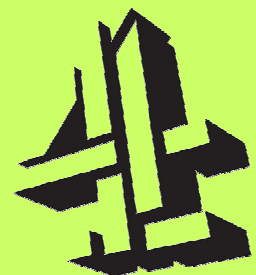
A new Channel 4 three-part documentary began on Thursday, August 1 looking at the myths and perceptions of the crisis faced by people who want to live in social housing, with two episodes focusing on Tower Hamlets.

Tower Hamlets Council, despite being a deprived, inner city borough, has built the most social housing in the country for two years in a row.

The council has offered the documentary makers the opportunity to frame the social, economic and political complexities of the national issues surrounding social housing through a local lens. The country is facing the biggest social housing shortage since World War II with the private rental market dominating certain areas with high rents and changes to the welfare system resulting in 1.8 million people waiting to be housed in suitable accommodation across the UK. By 2015, local council authorities will have lost a third of their budgets that are currently used to support and house people.

The Episodes involving Tower Hamlets were shown on Thursday 1st August and Thursday 15th August. These Episodes are available on 4OD catch on this website;

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/tags/documentaries/4od>



NOTICE BOARD



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](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

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