



Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey: 2012-13 results

Overview

This report is a summary of the results from the 2012-13 Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey which explores residents' views about the council, services and the local area. The survey is based on face to face interviews with 1,192 residents chosen to be representative of the Tower Hamlets population. The survey took place during March and April 2013 and was carried out by TNS-BRMB.

Comparative data for London are drawn from the Survey of Londoners, also run by TNS-BRMB. This was carried out using a similar methodology, but took place earlier - during October 2012. The London survey data provides benchmarking information for core questions that are asked on the survey every year.

The topics covered in the 2012-13 survey were:

Core questions:

- Satisfaction with services provided by the council and partner agencies: views of all residents and users (for non-universal services);
- Views about the image of the council;
- Overall satisfaction with the council;
- Personal concerns and worries;



Tower Hamlets additional topical questions:

- Views about prevalence of different types of anti-social behaviour;
- Cohesion and engagement;
- Satisfaction with the local area;
- Views about the long-term benefits of Olympics for residents;
- Awareness of the Mayor's activities;
- Contacting the council and East End Life readership.

The sections that follow provide a short summary of the survey results and some key actions that will be taken in response. A more detailed action plan is being developed.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Notes on interpreting the survey data in this report

All figures presented are survey estimates not precise measures, and as such, they have a degree of sampling variability attached to them. The concept of 'statistical significance' is used here to highlight those differences that are likely to reflect real differences (or changes over time), as opposed to those which may be simply reflecting the sampling variability attached to estimates. Changes or differences that are statistically significant are denoted by arrows.  

All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Summary

Overall, the survey results are positive for Tower Hamlets. Since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, Tower Hamlets Council - like most local authorities - has had to significantly reduce its expenditure. In spite of this, overall satisfaction with the way 'Tower Hamlets Council runs things' has remained consistent.

Residents' views about the council's image have held up well across most areas, and the council's position is good compared to London. Tower Hamlets outperforms London on four out of 12 aspects of its image, and is on par with London for the other eight. Tower Hamlets residents are more likely than Londoners in general to say that their council is making the area a better place to live.

Tower Hamlets continues to perform well compared to the London average on service ratings. There has been a net increase in satisfaction levels with council services, with some services continuing to show year-on-year improvement. Of the 15 services compared with London, the council was on par for nine of them and better for four services.

The majority of residents (82 per cent) are satisfied with their local area as a place to live - an improvement on last year. In addition, views about community cohesion remain positive. 81 per cent of respondents believe the 'local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together' – the highest figure since the survey began in 1998/99.

Compared to the rest of London, more residents feel that the council is making the local area a better place to live and keeping them informed. In addition, fewer of our residents feel that the council doesn't do enough for people like them or is difficult to get through to on the phone.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Views about services - general perceptions

Table 1 shows 'all resident' satisfaction ratings for 15 service areas. These relate to general perceptions about services across all residents, regardless of whether they use the service or not. Ratings are typically lower for services that are less widely used as these services attract a higher proportion of don't know responses.

Public transport remains the most highly rated service area, rated as good, very good or excellent, by 78 per cent of residents. Other highly rated services include street lighting and refuse collection, both rated positively by two thirds of residents.

Over the last year, ratings have improved for four service areas: Leisure and sports (+5 points); collection of council tax (+5 points); Libraries/Idea Stores (+4 points) and public transport (+4 points).

1. Views about services (all residents)

	% rating service good to excellent						Change over year (rounded*)	Tower Hamlets vs. London (difference)
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13		
Base: all residents	69	65	67	72	74	78	4	3
Public transport	69	65	67	72	74	78	4	3
Street lighting	64	61	64	66	67	67	0	0
Refuse collection	66	66	66	68	67	65	-3	-1
Recycling facilities	67	66	65	68	63	64	1	-5
Local health services	59	65	65	68	66	63	-3	2
Libraries/Idea stores	55	55	59	58	58	62	4	1
Collection of council tax	50	55	53	57	57	62	5	-3
Parks and open spaces	54	53	61	60	60	60	0	-7
Street cleaning	51	59	62	60	59	59	0	6
Policing	39	41	47	50	46	49	3	-1
Leisure & sports facilities	46	45	47	47	44	49	5	4
Road/pavement repairs	41	37	38	39	41	40	-1	4
Housing benefit service	29	29	33	33	32	26	-6	4
Council housing	25	26	29	33	31	25	-6	5
Parking services	25	23	25	30	26	25	-1	-3

Note: 'All resident' satisfaction ratings are typically lower for services not used by the majority of the population (eg housing benefit, council housing) as these attract a higher proportion of don't knows. Services used by less than 25 per cent of those surveyed were excluded from this analysis.

** All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.*

Ratings remain similar to last year's for 9 out of the 15 service areas monitored. The only two service areas to see a decline in ratings are housing benefit and council housing (both down 6 points).

The perception change in relation to housing benefit and council housing may have been informed by recent high-profile changes to the welfare benefits system, including the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' and the forthcoming benefit cap.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

The council's Welfare Reform Task Group has been working with colleagues across the council, partner organisations and the third sector, to help mitigate the impact of the changes on residents. However, the council's Benefits service experienced exceptional levels of demand in April 2013, leading to a high number of unallocated work items at the time of the survey. This has been reducing steadily since then and it is anticipated that the backlog will be cleared shortly. It should be noted that despite these falls in ratings, both housing benefit and council housing service ratings are better in Tower Hamlets than the London average.

Tower Hamlets Homes have set out plans to better understand less satisfied groups amongst their residents, including through targeted geographic and demographic engagement. In addition, a focus on improving the ease with which residents – both tenants and leaseholders – can contact THH and get a resolution first time should improve this rating.

Overall, Tower Hamlets' position for service satisfaction relative to London remains positive – ratings are either the same as, or better than, the London average for most services. Of the 15 services compared, borough ratings are higher for four services, on a par with London for nine and lower for two: parks & open spaces and recycling.

Resident satisfaction with recycling facilities deteriorated last year, to a level that is lower than London, and has remained stable since. It should be noted that amongst people who use recycling facilities, satisfaction is higher and similar to satisfaction across London. This suggests the issue may be one of perception. The Public Realm service intends to undertake additional communications work including campaigns targeted at estates to increase the amount of recycling and at houses to increase participation in the food and garden waste collection scheme. Improvements are also planned to the Reuse and Recycling centre, along with promotion of the site.

Tower Hamlets has historically had worse satisfaction than London for parks and open spaces. This may be due to the limited green spaces in the borough – 1.1 hectares per 1,000 people compared to 2.4 nationally. The extensive works carried out in the borough's parks in 2012/13 appear to have not yet impacted on the satisfaction level: it has remained at 60 per cent for the last three years. There is a further programme of parks improvements planned for 2013/14 as well as additional work to promote the use of our existing parks and open spaces. In addition, the council's planning policies require provision of public accessible open space and residential amenity space as part of new development proposals.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

User satisfaction ratings

Table 2 shows user satisfaction ratings which capture views about services from people who use them. These ratings provide a 'like for like' comparison for services that are not used by everyone, and offer a more informed assessment of service quality than 'all resident' ratings. These are monitored for 11 services.

Libraries and Idea Stores is the most highly rated service area – rated as good through to excellent by 81 per cent of users – and significantly above the London average. Ratings also remain high for Children's Centres, primary and nursery education, and recycling – all rated positively by more than 70 per cent of users.

As in previous years, user satisfaction ratings continue to be lowest for parking services (29 per cent) and council housing (42 per cent). Council housing was the only service area to see a significant fall in user satisfaction over the year, which now brings it in line with the London average. User satisfaction with the Housing Benefit service has fallen by -6 points. Whilst this is not a statistically significant change, trend data do indicate a decline in satisfaction over the last three years.

2. User satisfaction with services

	% rating service good to excellent						Change over year (rounded*)	Tower Hamlets vs. London (difference)
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13		
<i>Base: service users</i>								
Libraries/Idea stores	72	76	81	76	77	81	4	6
Recycling facilities	71	74	72	72	68	71	3	-3
Parks and open spaces	63	65	66	63	65	66	0	-7
Leisure and sports facilities	61	65	71	61	61	66	5	7
Housing benefit service	59	64	66	63	60	54	-6	0
Council housing	39	41	47	48	51	42	-8	-2
Parking services	29	28	28	34	30	29	-1	-6
<i>Services - smaller sample size #:</i>								
Children's Centres	-	-	82	72	64	77	13	n/a
Primary education	73	69	77	71	70	74	4	4
Nursery education	76	75	79	74	79	72	-6	-5
Secondary education	62	65	64	55	64	69	5	6

Less than 25 per cent of the sample population used these services, so confidence intervals attached to these data are larger (around ± 6 to 9 percentage points) than for other services. Services used by less than 10 per cent of the sample are excluded altogether due to poor data reliability.

* All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.

Satisfaction with Children's Centres was significantly up on the previous year (+13 points - although caution is advised in relation to interpreting the size of the rise as the sample of users was small and confidence intervals are high).

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Relative to the London average, user ratings are higher in Tower Hamlets for Libraries/Idea Stores and leisure and sports, and lower for parks and open spaces, and parking services.

User satisfaction for the Parking service is unchanged this year but has improved across London as a whole. It should be noted that the council only controls half of the parking land in the borough with much of the remainder being estate parking and therefore out of the council's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the service has developed a programme of engagement activities with residents.

Image of the council

To assess what residents think of the council, respondents are asked to say to what extent they agree or disagree with 12 different statements about the council's image. The friendliness and politeness of staff continues to be the most positively rated aspect of the council's image (77 per cent), though the rating is down slightly on last year (by 4 points). Other highly rated areas include the extent to which the council is felt to be: doing a good job, making the place a better place to live, and keeping residents informed – all rated positively by around three quarters of residents.

3. Image of the Council

	% agreeing great deal/to some extent					2012-13	Change over year (rounded*)	Tower Hamlets vs. London (difference)
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12			
<i>Base: all residents</i>								
Staff are friendly and polite	75	76	76	81	80	77	-4 ↓	1
Doing a good job	68	69	72	72	76	76	-1	1
Making local area a better place to live	67	67	72	72	74	74	1	7 ↑
Keeps residents informed	68	70	72	71	76	73	-3	5 ↑
Efficient and well-run	61	59	64	65	67	66	-2	-1
Listens to concerns of local residents	55	57	57	61	58	56	-1	0
Responds quickly when asked for help	49	52	56	58	59	51	-8 ↓	0
Provides good value for Council Tax I pay	41	43	50	51	49	50	1	-2
Involves residents when making decisions	51	49	53	53	49	49	0	-2
Does a better job than a year ago	50	49	52	51	45	42	-3	-1
<i>Doesn't do enough for people like me</i>	51	50	47	45	41	40	-1	-7 ↓
<i>Difficult to get through to on phone</i>	43	40	37	40	36	38	2	-8 ↓

*Notes: Statements/figures in italics are negative statements - so a fall in the percentage is an improvement.
* All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.*

Over the year, views about the council's image have held up well and ratings remain similar to last year's for 10 out of the 12 areas. One notable exception is in relation to speed of response: only one half of residents feel that the council responds quickly when asked for help – significantly down on last year by 8 points. Further analysis carried out on this indicator shows that Tower Hamlets Homes tenants saw the biggest drop in satisfaction over the year on this measure.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

THH is working on a number of activities to help increase this rating in future years. This includes: process improvements for emergency repairs; working closely with the repairs contractors on the proportion of repairs completed 'right first time', improving the efficiency of the Local Service Centre and greater use of social media.

Overall, the council's position relative to London remains positive – across all 12 areas - the borough is either on a par with, or better than, London. The council outperforms London in four areas: difficult to get through on the phone (8 points lower), 'doesn't do enough for people like me' (7 points lower), making the local area a better place to live (7 points higher), and keeping residents informed (5 points higher).

Respondents are also asked a question to gauge their overall satisfaction with the council: *Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Tower Hamlets Council runs things?* In response, just under two thirds (64 per cent) of residents said they were very or fairly satisfied, the same as last year, and similar to the London average (67 per cent).

4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Tower Hamlets Council runs things?

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Change
% Very/fairly satisfied	59	59	67	63	64	64	0

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Areas of personal concern

Crime remains the top personal concern for borough residents: 41 per cent of residents said it was one of their top 3 concerns, similar to the London-wide average. Lack of jobs is the second most pressing concern mentioned by 35 per cent of residents – this is up 4 points since last year and is at its highest level since the survey began in 1998/99. Concern over rising prices and interest rates is up by 7 points, also the highest level of concern since the survey began.

Litter/dirt in the street remains a key concern for just over one quarter of residents, similar to last year, and the same as the London average. Lack of affordable housing is a significant, and growing, concern for around one quarter of residents: concern is up 5 points since last year and is now at the highest level for over ten years. Residents also reported more concern about the quality of the health service and pollution - both up 4 points.

5. Areas of personal concern

	% who said issue was one of their top 3 concerns						Change over year (rounded*)	Tower Hamlets vs. London (difference)
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13		
Crime	55	47	46	42	42	41	0	0
Lack of jobs	19	22	26	30	31	35	4 ↑	6 ↑
Litter/dirt in the street	26	27	19	23	24	26	2	0
Lack of affordable housing	23	17	21	22	21	26	5 ↑	0
Rising prices / interest rates	11	12	9	17	14	21	7 ↑	-1
Not enough being done for young people	17	16	16	18	20	19	-1	0
Level of council tax	24	24	22	16	17	19	2	-3
Quality of health service	14	15	13	14	12	16	4 ↑	-3
Traffic congestion	18	15	16	13	13	12	-1	-9 ↓
Pollution of the environment	14	17	13	11	8	12	4 ↑	3 ↑
Standard of education	11	14	11	13	10	11	1	-3 ↓
Not enough done for the elderly	11	11	9	9	10	10	-1	-2
Lack of recreational facilities	10	9	9	9	8	10	1	1
Number of homeless people	7	11	9	8	9	9	1	0
Poor public transport	8	11	8	8	5	5	0	-2 ↓

** All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.*

Compared to Londoners generally, Tower Hamlets residents are less likely to list concerns over: traffic congestion, the standard of education and poor public transport. Conversely, borough residents are more likely to be concerned about lack of jobs and pollution.

Many of the areas of personal concern where concern has grown are linked to national issues - lack of jobs, rising prices / interest rates, affordable housing, and quality of health service.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

The borough's employment rate has increased in recent years, narrowing the gap with London, with the proportion of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) also decreasing. The council has sought to use its resources to complement the work of Jobcentre Plus in this area. This includes assisting residents into employment with Skillsmatch and providing apprenticeships. Work will take place in 2013/14 to deliver targeted support to tackle concentrations of unemployment among key target groups. In addition, the council will continue to engage the supply chain of large businesses to maximise opportunities for local people.

The council has delivered some of the highest levels of affordable housing in the country over recent years. However, given demand for housing, and the continuing increase in prices, it is likely that concern will remain high. There has been a London-wide increase in the level of concern. Although this measure is impacted by national and regional activity, the council will continue to work with developers, Registered Providers and the GLA to maximise the availability of affordable homes.

Concerns relating to rising prices and interest rates may be driven by changes to the welfare benefit system and the wider economy: factors primarily outside of the council's control. However, work is on-going to mitigate the impacts on, and provide support to, local residents. This includes funding for third sector advice services, development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy and the launch of an energy co-op.

Recent national reform of the NHS has been accompanied by questions and concerns about the quality of health care under the new system, as well as accessibility. Concern about the quality of the health service has risen across London. The council will – through the Health and Wellbeing Board - develop a more detailed response to the recent local rise in concern about health services. This will involve a range of health commissioners and providers.

The council is carrying out a number of activities to combat pollution of the environment. This includes implementing a revised Air Quality Action Plan, bidding for GLA funding for further resources and continuing to work with construction firms to adopt the construction code. In addition, a cumulative impact policy in the Brick Lane area will assist with noise pollution.

Worries about spending cuts

Residents were also asked a question to gauge the level of concern about public spending cuts. The question posed was: *'Thinking about the next two or three years, how worried are you that you or your family will suffer directly from cuts in spending on public services such as health, education or welfare benefits?'* The majority of residents (71 per cent) said they were very or fairly worried about cuts in spending, a similar proportion to last year.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Views about the local area and Anti-social Behaviour

Table 6 shows resident perceptions about ASB problems and views about the local area more generally.

Residents were asked about their views about four different types of ASB. Concern over drug use and drug dealing continues to be a key concern: 55 per cent of residents felt *people using or dealing drugs* was a 'very' or 'fairly' big problem in their local area. Around one half of all residents also cited *Rubbish and litter lying around* as a big problem in their area. Concerns over drunkenness and vandalism also remain at above 40 per cent.

6. Views about the local area							
	% of residents						Change over year (rounded*)
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
ASB problems in local area: % who said the issue was a very or fairly big problem:							
People using or dealing drugs	62	54	51	52	53	55	2
Rubbish and litter lying around	56	51	43	45	52	50	-1
People being drunk or rowdy	47	40	40	40	43	46	3
Vandalism, graffiti and criminal damage	54	45	42	37	41	43	2
Thinking about your local neighbourhood, how satisfied are you with the area as place to live?							
Very/fairly satisfied	73	76	84	78	78	82	4
This local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?							
Definitely/tend to agree	71	69	75	76	78	81	2
Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?							
Definitely/tend to agree	48	46	53	53	46	43	-3
* All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.							

Views about ASB have become a little more negative over the last two years, after earlier improvements. However, there have been no statistically significant changes over the most recent year. London benchmarking information is not available for these questions.

Tower Hamlets has recently increased funding in Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) and the CCTV control room to support better handling of ASB reports. In addition, Partnership Taskforce 2 – the council funded police team – has now been launched and will support a more nuanced response to particular types of ASB including behaviour related to prostitution and gangs. In addition, a strategic review of crime and ASB is planned to be completed by the end of the year. This will provide the Partnership with an action plan to improve the way we respond to crime and ASB.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Despite concerns about ASB, overall, views about living in the area are positive: the majority of residents (82 per cent) said they are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live – up 4 points from last year.

One Tower Hamlets

Views on cohesion in the local area also remain positive: the majority of residents (81 per cent) feel that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. While this score is not significantly different from last year's (78 per cent), when viewed over the longer term the survey data show an improving trend.

Views on resident influence remain mixed: under half (43 per cent) of residents felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area – while not significantly different to last year, this was ten points lower than the figure two years previously. The council and Partnership have developed their arrangements to listen and respond to the concerns of local residents. As part of this, more localised mechanisms to engage with residents at a ward level – the Local Community Ward Forums – will provide additional opportunities to listen to the concerns of residents.

Views about long-term benefits of the Olympics

Views about the long-term benefits of the Olympic and Paralympic Games have become more negative post-Games (Table 7). Well under half (43 per cent) of the borough's residents felt there would be long-term benefits from the Games for Tower Hamlets residents specifically, while just over half (52 per cent) felt that there would be benefits for Londoners more generally. Both measures have shown a significant fall over the last year. Views have become progressively more negative in recent years.

7. Views about long-term benefits of the Olympics for residents

% agreeing that the Olympics will have long-term benefits for:	% of residents					Change over year*
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
Tower Hamlets residents	63	67	57	49	43	-6 ↓
People of London & surrounding area	69	75	66	58	52	-5 ↓

** All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point - post calculations. This means that changes over the year may not equate exactly to the difference between the two rounded figures presented.*

Given the immediate impact of the Games has already happened, the task for the council now is to help ensure a strong Olympic legacy is secured for local residents. The Queen Elizabeth II Park – the former Olympic Park – is part-situated in Tower Hamlets and once the works to it are complete it will include a new school, green spaces and two new bridges connecting the north east of the borough to the rest of the Olympic Park and onwards to Stratford. In addition, the council has been lobbying to secure housing in the Olympic village for local residents. The Growth Boroughs Unit – a collaborative body of the Olympic Host Boroughs – will continue to support regeneration.

Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey 2012-13 - Results

Communication

East End Life remains a key source of information for residents - 51 per cent read it regularly. While telephone remains the most popular method of contacting the council (used by 57 per cent of residents) there is increasing interest in online methods for future contact: 12 per cent of all residents said they had contacted the council over the last year by email and 29 per cent said they would prefer to use this method in the future.

8. Contacting the council - current and preferred methods

	% of respondents	
	Method(s) used to contact the council in last year	Preferred method(s) of contacting the council in the future
<i>Note: multiple responses possible so percentages sum to more than 100</i>		
Telephone	57	72
Visit to a council office	16	20
Email	12	29
Council website	8	11
Letter	4	5
Haven't contacted the council over the year	23	n/a
<i>Notes: Only methods used by more than 1 per cent of the population are listed. The format of these questions was changed in 2012-13 so historical data are not strictly comparable.</i>		

Almost nine out of ten residents (88 per cent) said they had access to the internet. Most had access at home (85 per cent) and/or at work (36 per cent), and 8 per cent said they accessed the internet at a Tower Hamlets library or Idea Store.

Awareness about the Mayor's activities

To gauge awareness about the Mayor's activities, respondents were asked: *how much, if anything, would you say you know about what the Mayor of Tower Hamlets is doing for Tower Hamlets?* In response, just under one third (32 per cent) said they knew 'a fair amount' or 'a great deal' about the Mayor's activities – similar to last year.

Further Information

This briefing was produced by the council's Corporate Strategy and Equality team which is based in the Chief Executive's Directorate.

Email: strategyandperformance@towerhamlets.gov.uk