

Council housing annual report

2023-2024



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Message from the mayor

The Council has directly managed its homes since 1 November 2023, when Tower Hamlets Homes' staff came back in-house, a move that puts residents at the heart of the service.

We are working more closely with residents because we all appreciate the invaluable insight and experience you bring. That is why we set up the *Tenant's Voice* – a new panel of tenants and leaseholders – to improve standards and give you a greater say in decisions about your homes and neighbourhoods.

Together we are working on improvements to meet and exceed the Housing Ombudsman's best practice guidelines and new housing regulations. The decisions we are taking today are shaping the service of the future.

I know that the issues surrounding fire safety have been incredibly difficult for our residents and it is one of my top priorities. Last year, the Council spent more than £10 million on fire safety and mechanical, electrical and other safety works. A total of 5,042 homes had electrical tests and where needed had upgraded smoke alarms and heat detectors.

Over the next three years we will invest £85 million in upgrading our homes, including a further £10 million ringfenced to fund only building and fire-safety works. That figure rises to £140 million over the next five years.

We also increased the ways that you can report damp and mould, including easier access through my.home.org.uk, our online service, which now has the option to upload photographs. Our call centre staff are trained in prioritising damp and mould, and I encourage everyone with an issue to report it.

You will see in this report there is still room for improvement. We can always be better, and it is through your involvement that we will achieve progress. I see tenants and leaseholders as equal partners in improving services, upgrading homes, and creating communities in which people can thrive. Listening to you and ensuring your voice is at the heart of decisions is especially important to us, and I want more of you to tell us how we are doing and what improvements you would like to see.



Lutfur Rahman,
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets



Housing stock



Tenure	2023/2024
Tenanted	11,592
Leasehold	9,989
Total	21,581

Tenants' property type	
Flat	7,984
Maisonette	2,833
House/bungalow	775
Total	11,592



Bedroom size	
0	660
1	3,216
2	4,509
3	2,585
4	536
5	73
6	9
7	4
Total	11,592

In-year changes	
New additions	186
Loss of homes due to Right to Buy	80

Repairs

	Number	Tower Hamlets	London Average
Responsive repairs	91,377		
Emergency repairs completed on time		75.9%	90.6%
Non-emergency repairs completed on time		81.3%	77.5%
Satisfaction with the way repairs were dealt with		65.3%	63.3%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete the repair		61.7%	60%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained		65.5%	60.9%



We spent **£23.6 million** on repairs and maintenance, equal to **£2,036** for each of our tenanted homes.



Responsive repairs completed right first time **75%**, target: **85%**

Issues

The repairs service faced some challenges in 2023-24 including:

- serious boiler outages in 7 blocks in November/December
- many more residents than usual reporting damp and mould
- some contractors under-performing

How we are putting this right

We are currently reviewing our Repairs Service. Based on resident feedback, we know how important it is to deliver a quality, timely repairs service. We expect this review to be completed by December 2024 and the recommendations will include strengthened management of our contractors, getting things right first time and better communication updating you on any outstanding repairs with clear timelines on when we will fix this for you.

Damp and mould

We are improving our response to damp and mould by:

- Launching our damp and mould policy
- Increased use of technology to identify and track damp and mould jobs
- Evaluating use of smart thermostats designed to help you better manage your heating

We will also be working to new timescales for tackling damp and mould, known as Awaab's Law, when they are introduced by the Government.

Safety

	Tower Hamlets	London Average
Gas safety checks	99.97%	99.84%
Fire safety checks	98.66%	99.92%
Asbestos safety checks	99.03%	100%
Water safety checks	83.24%	99.47%
Lift safety checks	58.97%	98.30%
Satisfaction that your home is safe	66.5%	66.5%



We aim for 100% compliance on these safety measures and are making improvements every month with increased focus and resources.

Our performance on water checks is now more than 88% and on lift inspections over 90%

In response to Grenfell, we created a 12-person building safety team to help keep our homes safe.

Part of their role includes providing fire safety advice to our residents, undertaking building safety inspections and ensuring that recommendations on fire safety works are carried out.

Since 2017, the council has:

- **Carried out fire safety works to 171 blocks and 11,426 homes at a cost of £24m.**
- **Fire safety visits to 14,460 homes**
- **Installed 1,846 front doors**
- **Annual checks on smoke and heat alarms in all homes.**
- **In October 2023, we consulted residents of the 76 high-rise blocks covered by the Building Safety Act, and have fire safety plans in place for each of them.**

Major works

Satisfaction with major works: **84.6%**

Last year most of our major works spend was related to fire and building safety.

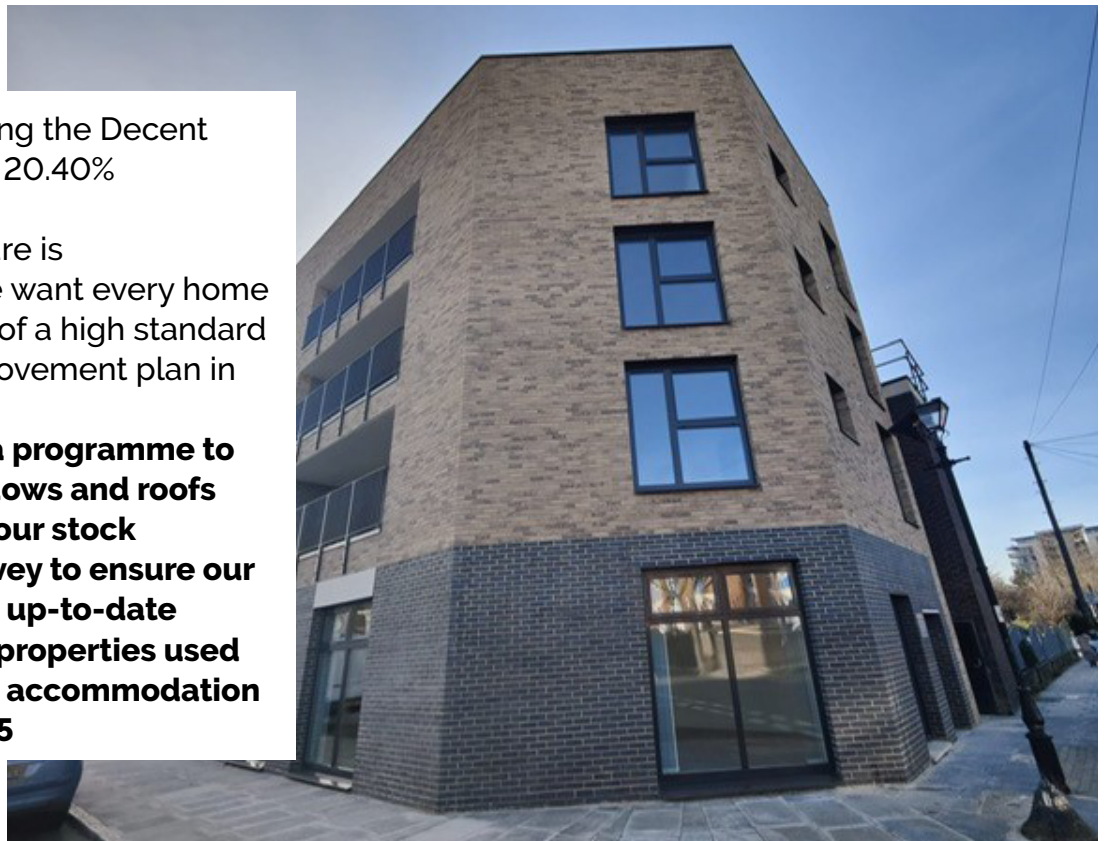
We also carried out:

- **Window replacements to 40 homes**
- **Boiler replacements to 790 homes**
- **New front doors to 214 homes**
- **New kitchens and/or bathrooms to 45 homes**
- **Window, door and roof replacement to 9 houses**
- **Electrical inspection & repairs to 3,517 homes**

Homes not meeting the Decent Homes Standard: 20.40%

We know this figure is unacceptable; we want every home we provide to be of a high standard and have an improvement plan in place, including:

- **Carrying out a programme to upgrade windows and roofs**
- **Accelerating our stock condition survey to ensure our information is up-to-date**
- **Surveying all properties used for temporary accommodation by March 2025**



New homes

Last year, 11 new build schemes of 181 new homes were added to the stock we manage. These are at locations across the borough and make better use of under-utilised land and sites. They include 6 wheelchair accessible homes.

Resident involvement

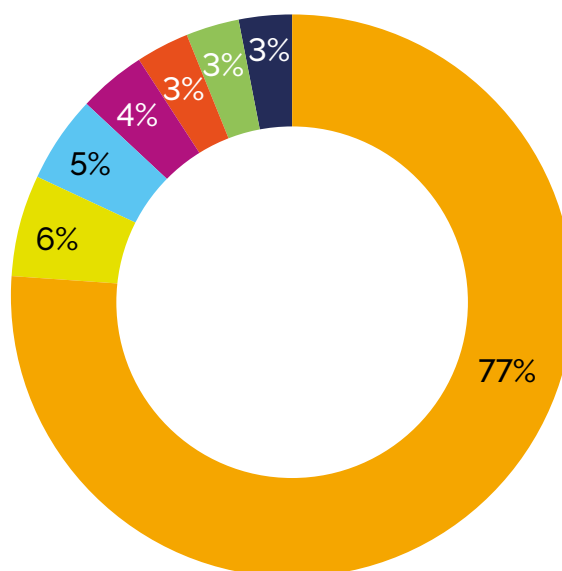
Satisfaction	Tower Hamlets	London Average
With overall service – tenant	65.3%	59%
With overall service – leaseholder	43.3%	N/A
Satisfaction with being kept informed	72.7%	66%
Satisfaction with views being taken into account	55.8%	51.3%
Agree they are treated fairly and with respect	73.9%	69%

Call handling	2023/24	Target
Calls received	156,211	
Calls answered	69%	92%
Satisfaction with the way we handled your call	81.8%	90%

Complaints	Tower Hamlets	London Average
Complaints received	1,919	
Tenant complaints p/1,000 stock	103.65	73.48
Complaints upheld	6.2%	9%
Tenant complaints answered on time	83.2%	73.9%
Satisfaction with complaints handling	26.3%	25.6%

Top 7 complaints

- Repairs
- Tenancy management
- Contact centre
- Leasehold service charges
- Cleaning
- Noise nuisance
- Other



12,229
Satisfaction surveys completed

Resident involvement

What you told us

The way we handle leaks from roofs and gutters needs improvement

Residents experienced a number of issues with Gas Boilers and communal heating outages

We have not always paid out sufficient compensation when things have gone wrong

We need to improve the way manage entry phone system repairs

What we did

We will complete a review of our Repairs service by the end of December 2024


We are putting in place measures to address this in blocks impacted and will ensure any long term investment is targeted to these homes

We have reviewed our approach to offering compensation

We have strengthened our contract management with the contractor who manages these repairs

Housing Ombudsman Service

You have the right to contact the Housing Ombudsman service at any point if you are having difficulty reporting your concerns or are dissatisfied with the service you receive.

 PO Box 152
Liverpool, L33 7WQ



Community Food Gardens

In May, the Berner community food garden re-opened after a full refurbishment and 34 new plots. Residents feel the garden has had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing with the community coming together and many families involving their children in growing fresh local produce.



There are now 37 council community food gardens across Tower Hamlets, with three new ones added this year in Stepney, Goldmans Close and inside the Collingwood community centre. 15 tons of fruit and vegetable was produced last year with over 3,500 residents regularly attending one of the gardens.

Neighbourhoods

Overall satisfaction	Tower Hamlets	London Average
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	67.5%	61.5%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	70.7%	62%
Anti-social behaviour		
No. of new ASB cases	1,117	
Cases of ASB per 1,000 properties	99.01%	32.1%
Satisfaction with handling of ASB case	58.2%	57.7%
Satisfaction with outcome of ASB case	49.1%	

ASB actions

- Warnings issued: 823
- ASB breach of tenancy warnings: 156
- Injunctions: 11
- Breach of injunction: 17
- Safeguarding referrals: 32
- Offensive weapons seized: 74
- Arrests: 293
- Evictions: 1

Housing ASB team

The housing ASB team is now part of Community Safety to allow resources to be better targeted and co-ordinated. Following consultation on the end of the Parkguard contract, Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers [THEOs] will be undertaking the estate patrolling service from 30 September 2024.

Tenancies and rent

Tenancy	2023/24
Total no. of lettings	449
Tenancies accepted on first offer	49%
Mutual exchanges	23*
Successful fraud cases	31**

* 14 in borough; 9 from outside

** 22 homes recovered from unauthorised occupation + 9 fraudulent Right to Buys prevented



The average number of days to let homes was **25**.
We have a target to reduce this to **22**.

Prison sentence for fraudulent tenant



An anonymous referral to the Fraud Team alleged a council tenant had obtained his tenancy fraudulently. The resident had claimed to be living with his family in overcrowded conditions rented from a private landlord and provided a tenancy agreement to substantiate his claim. A thorough investigation discovered the tenancy agreement was forged, and the resident had been living in a property owned by his wife. The Council initiated a criminal prosecution against the resident who was sentenced to 27 months in prison for tenancy fraud.

Help with rent arrears

A tenant with rent arrears of almost £3,800 was at risk of eviction. A member of the Financial Inclusion Team helped her review her Universal Credit claim and corrected errors that eventually resulted in a backdated payment of over £11,000. This allowed her to clear the arrears and receive a £4,000 refund from her rent account. The tenant can now manage her rent and living costs, having been severely affected by the cost-of-living crisis due to the initial underpayment of benefits.

Please contact the Financial Inclusion Team if you have anxieties about paying your rent.

Call us on **020 7364 5015 (option 3, option 3)**
or email us at welfarereform@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Income from rents and service charges: £110.6m

Expenditure	
major works	£19.9m
planned & cyclical maintenance	£0.2m
estate services	£17.2m
housing management	£9.7m
other direct costs	£21.2m
leasehold services	£2.7m
overheads	£9.8m
repairs & maintenance	£23.4m
procurement	£0.4m
fire & other safety works	£4.7m
Total	

We can offer you support on a range of money-related issues including debt, benefits, jobs and housing.

To book an appointment, please email us on Welfare.Reform@towerhamlets.gov.uk
or call **020 7364 2200**