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Tower Hamlets Homes

AUTUMN 2017

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If you've got a story you'd like to share – whether it's a personal achievement, a successful event or a fun-filled fundraiser – we'd like to hear from you. We want to see inspiring residents' stories in **opendoor**, so get in touch.

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Diane from Bow was our lucky winner last time round.

Answer a few simple questions online about this issue of **opendoor** and you could win a £50 Love2shop voucher.

We've made a few changes to **opendoor** and want to know what you think – simply go to the link below and you could be in the money!

thh.org.uk/opendoorsurvey

Community CODERS

Our Inspiring Communities Fund has helped dozens of projects get off the ground in our neighbourhoods. We've funded summer gatherings, local history projects and food gardens, to name a few. One of our projects – Coding Club – is part of a wider initiative by the Inventors Club Whitechapel to get young people interested in learning computer languages and improving their interpersonal skills. Akik Miah runs their Monday night sessions:

“I grew up in Stepney, so for the last 25 years I've seen lots of gangs in the area and I ended up getting involved in all of that. But – I came out on top. I went to college and university and got a degree. Growing up, I used to rely on the youth centres. If it wasn't for them, I would have been on the streets or in jail. As I got older, I thought: 'I want to give something back'. I earn enough in my career to be happy, so I wanted to dedicate some of my time to the young people in the area. I know a bit of coding and we need to get young people in the borough involved.

“We want to teach them other skills too, like talking to a crowd with passion. Coding is just to get them through the door; it's an avenue into computer gaming and apps. We want the parents to come as well so that they can see what it's all about. Most parents don't know what coding is – I tell them that their child is going to learn to talk to the computer in its own language. These workshops offer fun taster sessions for young people – come and try it!”

For more info on the Inventors Club, visit inventorsclub.co.uk. If you run a local community project, visit thh.org.uk for details of past projects and further rounds of funding.



**Watts
up?**

**New
Homes**

**That's
Watt.**

**Residents
are
moving
into
brand new
affordable
homes
in Watts
Grove**



A former depot for council refuse trucks in Bow Common has been transformed into a brand new development of affordable housing. In September, The **Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan**, popped in for tea with residents to celebrate.

At right: The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, with Mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs and THH Chief Executive Susmita Sen.

Bottom right: New residents, Mr and Mrs Murdoch, in their new home with flowers from the Mayor of London.

Owned by Tower Hamlets Council and managed by THH, there are 148 properties. The homes include houses and much-needed larger homes with three and four bedrooms plus accessible homes for wheelchair users.

Half of the homes are let at usual council homes rents and the rest are let at Tower Hamlet's Living Rents level. More than 300,000 people live in the borough and it's one of the fastest growing in London, so there is huge demand for homes, particularly affordable ones.

Specially designed play spaces, a community garden and 100 cycle spaces for residents make the estate a safe and attractive place to live. Rooftop solar panels give the estate its own sustainable source of electric power.



Out with the old and in with the new. Mr and Mrs Murdoch are among the new residents, having lived for 38 years on the Boundary estate, some of the oldest social housing in London. Mrs Murdoch uses a wheelchair and her previous home was on two levels so she needed a more suitable home. Occupational therapists from THH worked with the family to make sure all their needs were met, including an accessible wet room bathroom.



The family are delighted with their new home. Mrs Murdoch said: "We are both very happy. This is perfect. It's given me more independence and saves me having to call on my husband and family for help all the time."

More work ahead. As the housing shortage continues, THH are working with Tower Hamlets Council to identify disused land on which to build more homes. In the past few months alone, planners have approved four more of our schemes, which will create 140 more new homes that will be managed by THH.

Remembering the history of the area

The four blocks have been named in recognition of the history of the land that they are built on.

Western House Up until World War2, Watts Grove was called Western Street.

Emmeline Court Honouring suffragettes Emmeline and daughter Sylvia Pankhurst. Sylvia moved to Bow in 1912 and campaigned for women's rights and living conditions in the East End.

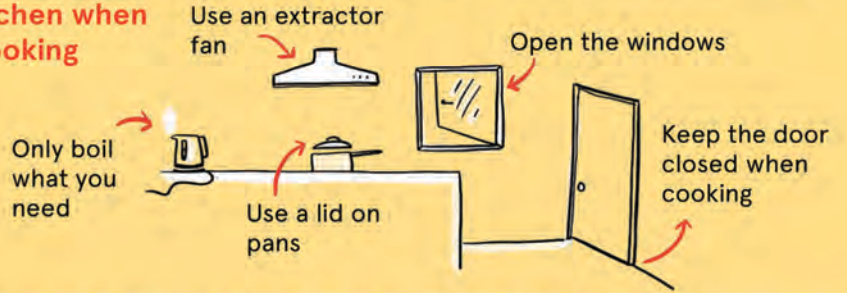
Santis House Named after a trading house that stood on the site until the early 20th century.

Tallow Court Reflecting a previous factory on the site until 1937. Tallow is a rather unpleasant product used to make candles and soap and most recently found on the new five pound note.

CONDENSATION AND DAMP IN YOUR HOME

GET RID OF MOISTURE

In the kitchen when you're cooking



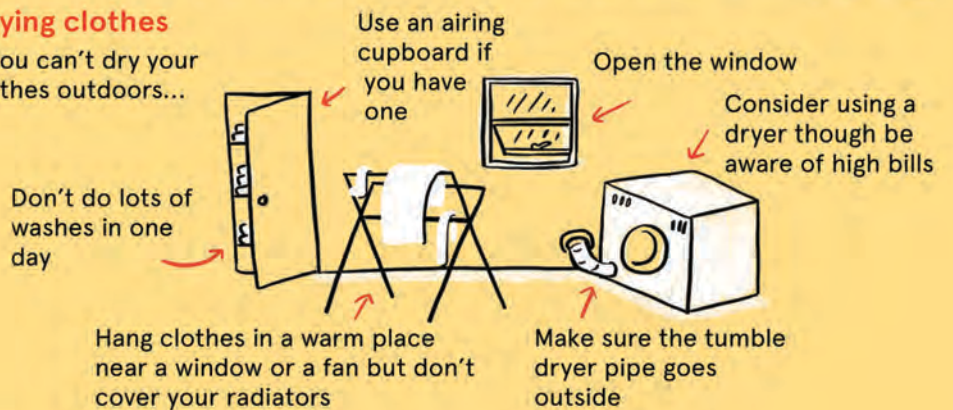
STOP DAMP AIR GETTING INTO OTHER ROOMS

In the bathroom when you're washing



Drying clothes

If you can't dry your clothes outdoors...



LET THE FRESH AIR IN



Update on fire safety

THH has a dedicated team working on fire safety, putting in place measures and works that will achieve fire safety compliance and keep residents safe. We've put lots of information and advice on our website and have been holding meetings with Tenants, and Residents, Associations.

Fire safety work has started in a number of areas. The work is underway at the blocks identified as having the highest priority for work, and residents in these blocks have received letters explaining what work is being done and have had a chance to attend drop-in sessions and meetings.

Some works, such as repairs and clearances of dumped, bulky and stored items, have been completed.

What happens next?

The Fire Risk Assessments identified areas that needed further investigation, and THH surveyors are carrying out inspections and drawing up plans for any necessary works.

We are developing a plan to ensure all fire safety works are completed as soon as possible, and this includes fire safety works being prioritised and delivered within the existing five-year Better Neighbourhoods works programme.

High rise blocks with enclosed single staircases are our next priority and will be completed once surveyors have drawn up plans for the works. A further programme is being developed to address all of the lower priority works required to other blocks.

What you can do to help us keep your home safe

Cigarettes are the highest cause of fires, so please remember that smoking is not allowed in communal areas. If you do smoke, then make sure that cigarettes are stubbed out and disposed of carefully and you should never smoke in bed.

Corridors and walkways must be kept clear of obstructions, and items stored on private balconies need to be non-flammable. Electrical items must be kept inside your home.

More information is available on our website at towerhamletshomes.org.uk/firesafety

Making Universal Credit go swimmingly

Not sure where to start?

We have a friendly team of people who can offer free, confidential advice to help get your finances in shape and explain Universal Credit.

Local resident Rabia spoke to us about her experience with Universal Credit and the help that was on offer from Tower Hamlets' Homes welfare reform team.

Rabia lives in Poplar in a THH home, with her daughter aged 11 and son aged nine. She says: "I got help from the Universal Credit team through falling into rent arrears. I can usually pay all my bills on time, but I was finding it hard to manage my money.

"Mohammed in the team was brilliant, and once I had sorted out my rent arrears, he helped me to work out a repayment plan that I could afford. Universal Credit is paid monthly and there's a six-week waiting time before you get your first payment. This means that you could have bills coming in but no money to pay them which is stressful.

"Mohammed dealt with the whole process for me. He was friendly, stopped me from worrying and was only ever a phone call away. It really makes a difference to get practical help, like a breakdown on what to budget for monthly.

"Not having to worry as much about money means I can get on with the important things in life, like getting my qualification as a sports instructor."



Local resident Rabia

SET UP YOUR RENT PAYMENTS

You'll need to pay your own rent monthly in advance when you receive your monthly Universal Credit payment. We can help you set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order.



OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT

If you don't have a bank account, we can help you to get one. Remember – you must have a bank account to receive your Universal Credit payments. You can convert your Post Office Cash Card to a Basic Bank Account with the Post Office or open a Basic Bank Account with any high street bank.



GET ONLINE

To manage your Universal Credit claim and account, you'll need to use the internet. We can help you get access or training.



MANAGE YOUR MONEY

With Universal Credit you get all your benefits in one single monthly payment (job seekers allowance, housing benefit, employment support allowance, income support, child tax credit and working tax credit). We can help you to budget.



NOT SURE HOW UNIVERSAL CREDIT AFFECTS YOU?

Get in touch for a chat: 020 7364 5015 (option 3, option 4)
rents@towerhamlets.gov.uk
thh.org.uk/askian

A message from John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets.

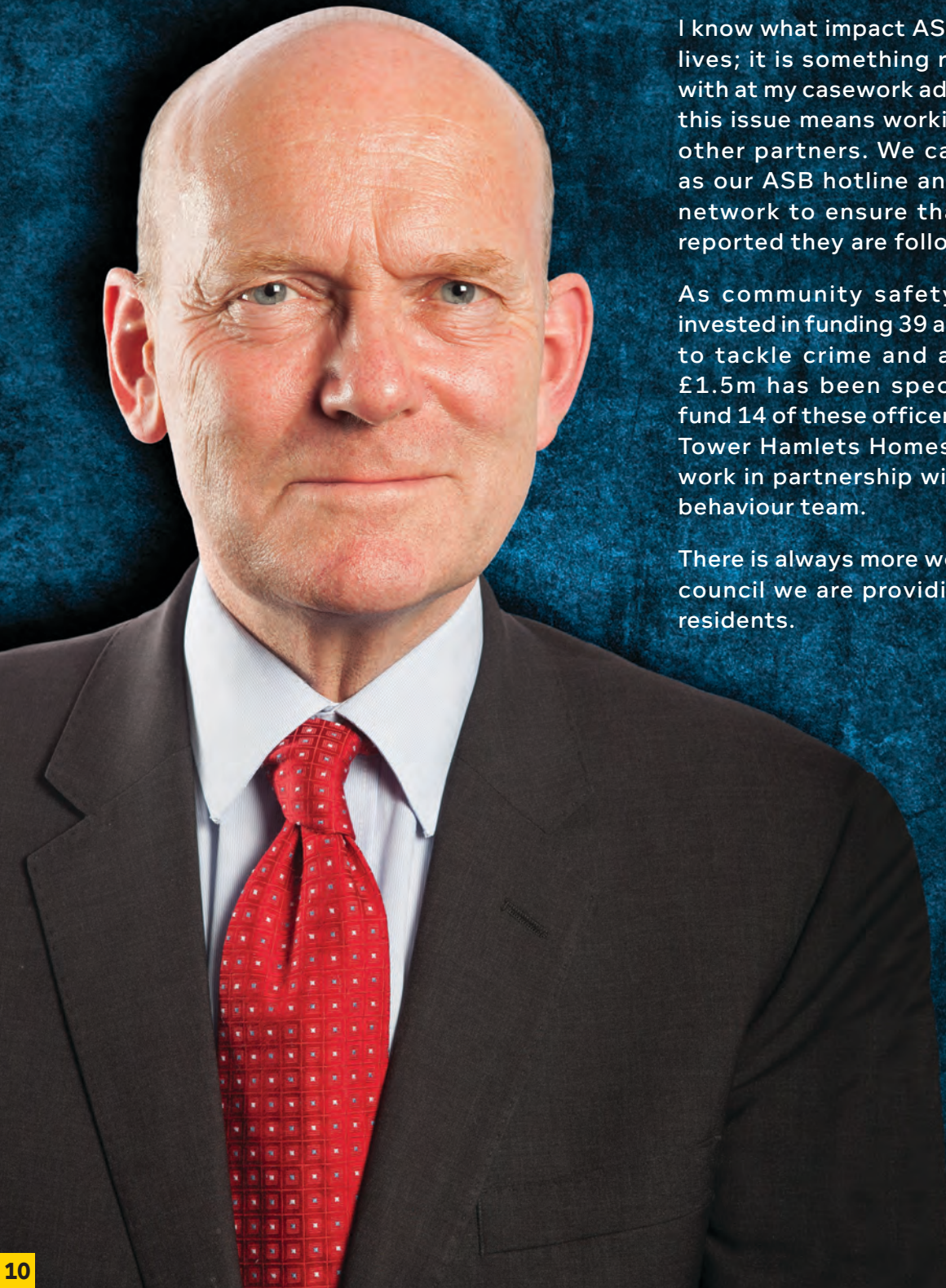
Community Safety is one of my main priorities as Mayor. A big part of this is tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) so people feel safe and reassured going about their business.

I think we do get on well in our part of the East End, but in a borough of over 300,000 people, there will always be issues with crime and anti-social behaviour.

I know what impact ASB can have on people's lives; it is something residents approach me with at my casework advice surgeries. Tackling this issue means working with the police and other partners. We can use resources such as our ASB hotline and our extensive CCTV network to ensure that when problems are reported they are followed up.

As community safety is a priority, I have invested in funding 39 additional police officers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. £1.5m has been specifically earmarked to fund 14 of these officers, who will be patrolling Tower Hamlets Homes Estates and who will work in partnership with the THH anti-social behaviour team.

There is always more work to be done, but as a council we are providing reassurance to our residents.





Staying

tough

on anti-social

behaviour



Keeping our residents safe and allowing them to enjoy living in their homes and neighbourhoods is the top priority for THH.

Our dedicated ASB team are here to deal with reports of ASB, and will keep residents involved and updated

as action is taken and cases progress. We work with police to stop problems and to gather evidence for more serious cases where we need to take legal action.

Thanks to a partnership with the police and ParkGuard Ltd (a private security firm), we now have more ways than ever to stop ASB happening and to deal with those who commit it.

More police on housing estates

From September there are more police on THH housing estates. An extra 14 police officers will focus on tackling crime and ASB, working alongside THH's ASB team. These extra police officers are funded by Tower Hamlets Council and will tackle issues such as acid attacks, drug dealing and violent crime.

Parkguard

You are likely to have seen officers from Parkguard Ltd walking or driving around our estates. They work in partnership with THH and the police to help prevent and deal with crime and ASB. Providing reassurance and assistance to the local community, they are accredited under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) by the Metropolitan Police.

CONTINUED

Staying tough on anti-social behaviour

How to report anti-social behaviour

If it's an emergency,
please contact the
police, otherwise you
can contact us in the
following ways:

Tel: 020 7364 5015

Email: asb@thh.org.uk

Tenants and leaseholders

THH won't allow the small minority of our tenants and leaseholders who commit ASB to spoil things for everyone else. Legal action will be taken against tenants who break their tenancy conditions and leaseholders or their sub-tenants who break the terms of their lease. In the most serious cases, it could mean THH applying to court for evictions.

Barbers shop closed down Drugs and weapons off the hairstyle menu

In October the hard work of our ASB team and police saw a barbers shop in Mile End closed down. The people operating from New Style Barbers were creating misery for local residents, fellow business and those visiting the area by operating it as a crime HQ.

Police were called repeatedly to the premises following reports of drug dealing, and drugs were found on the premises, along with weapons, such as knives, machetes and knuckle dusters.

Whilst the shop was open, there was an increase in police reports of noise, intimidating behaviour – and violent crime. Local parents told THH that they were afraid to let their children play in the streets.

Working with the police to collect evidence, the ASB team obtained a closure order for the premises from Stratford Magistrates Court. THH then changed the locks – and secured the shop. It's a great result for THH, and shows how partnership working can make a huge difference in local areas.



THH ASB team officer
Michaela French with
police as the barbers shop
is closed down.

Keep burglars out

Follow **3 STEP PROTECT** to keep your home safe

3 STEP PROTECT



Protect
your valuables



Safeguard
your building



Secure
your outside



For more advice visit www.met.police.uk/burglary

Annual Review

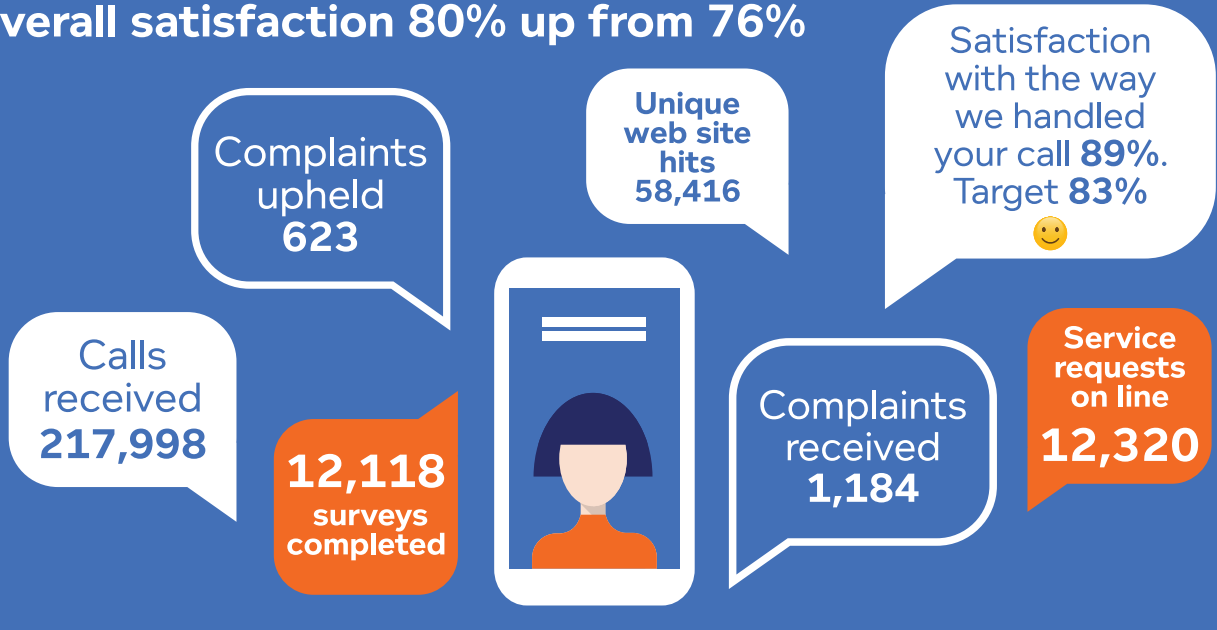
April 2016 - March 2017

Find out how we did in our last financial year. We set ourselves targets in some areas to make sure we give you the best service possible.

If we have a target, symbols indicate how we did. 😊 we met it
 😊 we almost met it 😞 we didn't meet our target.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Overall satisfaction 80% up from 76%



MONEY



Money from the Council **£86.9m**

Expenditure **£86.9m**



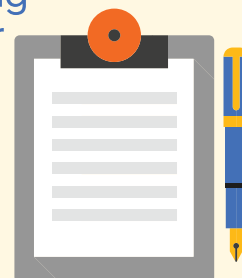
Major works	£24.5m
Planned & cyclical maintenance	£4.5m
Estate services	£10m
Housing management	£9.3m
Other direct costs	£8.8m
Leasehold services	£2.2m
Overheads	£11.1m
Repairs & maintenance	£16.5m

RENTS & SERVICE CHARGES

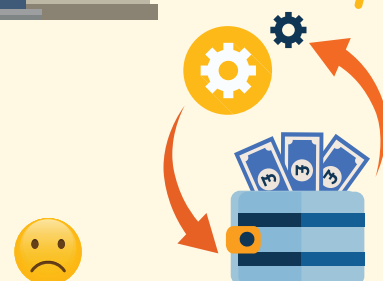


Rent collected **100%**
Target **100%***

Notices seeking possession for rent arrears issued **897**



Evictions for rent arrears **8**



Service charge collected **96.7%**
Target **100%**

For more information email:
communications@thh.org.uk

*includes collection of rent plus rent arrears

REPAIRS

64,453/95.6% Repairs completed on time

Target 98.5% 😞

82% Repairs completed right first time

Target 80% 😊

92% Satisfaction with the way repairs were dealt with

Target 92% 😊

TENANCY

467

Total no. of lettings

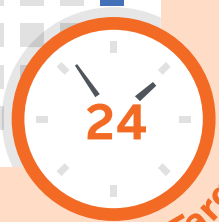
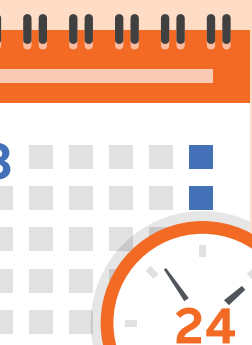
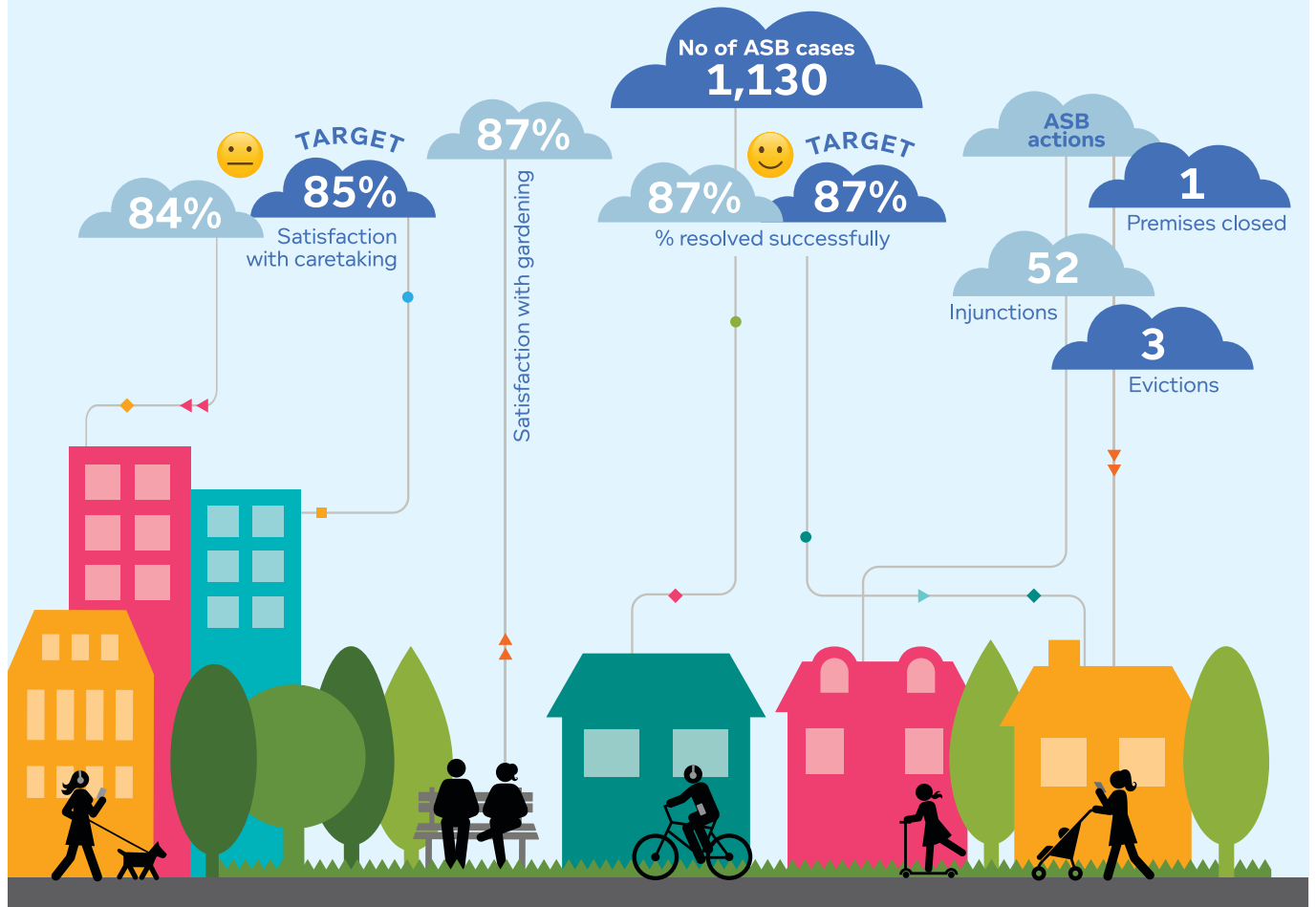
68%

Tenancies accepted on first offer

Average number of days to let homes

23

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY



Target



Mutual exchanges



Successful fraud cases 38*

*29 unauthorised recovered + 9 fraudulent RTBs

1503 AM

Radio

Active

A new show 'Homes and Communities' appears on the Betar Bangla radio station. THH is hosting a monthly discussion and phone-in on things that matter to residents. You can catch it from 4-5pm, on the second Thursday of every month.

Hosted by THH communications team member Luksana Choudhury, topics up for discussion have so far included domestic violence and Universal Credit.

Betar Bangla is the first radio station to serve the Bangladeshi community in the UK

and broadcasts from its base in Shadwell. They have over 70,000 listeners on 1503 AM, and followers from around the world listening through streaming.

Luksana said: "At first I found it quite daunting thinking that I would have to speak live on air, but once I got used to it I started to enjoy it. I did some training on the radio equipment and how the station works, and now there's no stopping me. Listen to my show, phone in and suggest any topics that we should cover."

Boundary Fun Palace alive with activity

For one day in October, Bethnal Green's Boundary estate was transformed into a 'Fun Palace' – a hub of creativity and celebration. For the second year running, Boundary and St Hilda's east residents joined together to bring arts and science to the community. Activities included drawing, knitting, banner making, local history, hands-on science – even learning songs written by 19th century East End Jewish immigrants with the Great Yiddish Parade Choir and Band.

Fun Palaces is a movement promoting community at the heart of culture, with an annual weekend of arts and science action created by, for and with local people. Next dates are 6 & 7 October 2018. Check out @palace_fun



We asked residents about life on the Boundary, Britain's first council estate



Holly Bremner

"I've lived here for 12 years. Boundary is a community where everyone knows everyone and we all get on."



Sabreen Ahmed

"I work in the Boundary community launderette. It's not somewhere just to go to work, it's like visiting friends, We talk about life. History passes through that launderette."



Leena Barakah

"I was born here. There are activities for everyone."

Thrifty ways to spruce up your home for under a tenner

Not got a whole lot of cash going spare, but could really do with getting your house ship-shape? Here are a few ideas on how to do it. 🏠 With the darkest days of winter approaching, you're going to be spending more time indoors from now on. So what better opportunity to give your home a bit of a facelift? 🏠 No, we're not talking about expensive, lengthy and noisy renovations. Instead, here is a list of handy ways you can brighten up your house, without breaking the bank. In fact, these easy DIY tips are either free or under a tenner, so you've got no excuse to not give your rooms a fresh new look.



Get artistic!

Bored of your old furniture? Paint it! A great place to start is your dining chairs. Pick different colours for each to create an eclectic look that will add a bit of pizzazz to the room.



Clear the clutter

Do you really need to keep all those old magazines from the early 2000s? We thought not. When you go through your cupboards you'll realise how much stuff you have that you just don't need. Get rid of anything you don't use and/or need, and your home will suddenly feel much bigger.



Throw on some colour

Even if it's not sunny outside, some splashes of colour will bring warmth into your house. A simple throw in a statement shade, like orange or yellow, spread across plain bedsheets is something you'll really want to snuggle up in.



Invest in cushions that pop

The same logic applies to cushions – opt for patterns and vibrant colours against minimalist sofas for a fresh look. Better yet, they are a brilliant way to sneakily cover worn couches and stains.

Repurpose

The price of homeware can be eye-watering. A lot of things lying around the house can be recycled. It's all about using a bit of imagination.

Why not use old jam jars as pots for cute plants or storing colourful buttons.



Paint an accent wall

An accent wall in a bright colour is a bold move, and can make a big difference to a room. If you're nervous about such a big commitment though, why not start small? Paint the side of your chest of drawers a sunny yellow colour and go from there.



Get colour-coding

Bookshelves can easily get out of control. It might be a bit of a pain, but re-organising your shelves will be well worth it. As your house isn't the local library, why not colour-code your books instead of alphabetising them? Talk about Instagram-ready!



Christmas opening arrangements

Over the Christmas and New Year break our Rushmead and Watney Market counters will be open as shown on the right. From **3:30pm on Friday 22 December 2017** to **08.30 am on 2 January 2018** we will provide an emergency only phone service. If you have an emergency repair during this period, please call our repairs helpline: **020 7364 5015** or **0800 376 1637**. For all other enquiries, please contact us when we re-open on **Tuesday 2 January** or email us at **contactus@thh.org.uk**

Friday 22 December

Rushmead 9am - 4.30pm

Watney Market One Stop Shop 9am - 4.30pm

Saturday 23 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Sunday 24 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Monday 25 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Tuesday 26 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Wednesday 27 December

Rushmead 9am - 4.30pm

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Thursday 28 December

Rushmead 9am - 4.30pm

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Friday 29 December

Rushmead 9am - 4.30pm

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Saturday 30 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Sunday 31 December

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Monday 1 January

Rushmead Closed

Watney Market One Stop Shop Closed

Tuesday 2 January

Rushmead 9am - 4.30pm

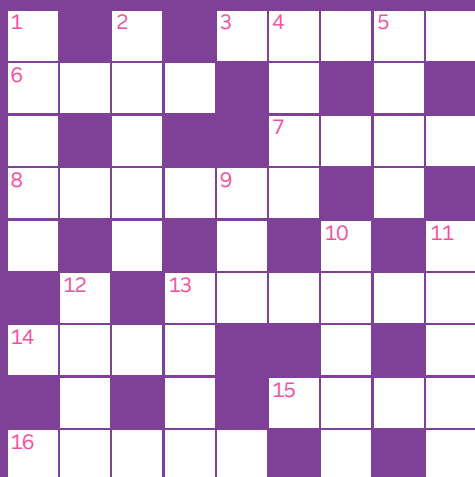
Watney Market One Stop Shop 9am - 4.30pm

Spot the difference

There are 6 differences between these two pictures – can you spot them?



Crossword



Across

- 3 Declare (5)
- 6 Parched (4)
- 7 Part of the body (4)
- 8 Yellow fruit (6)
- 13 In another country (6)
- 14 Number of sides in a square (4)
- 15 Land surrounded by water (4)
- 16 Smallest amount (5)

Down

- 1 Latin-American dance (5)
- 2 African big cats (5)
- 4 Large brass instrument (4)
- 5 The sound of a clock (4)
- 9 Pont of a pen (3)
- 10 Brag (5)
- 11 Poisonous snake (5)
- 12 Mislay (4)
- 13 Upper limbs (4)

True or false?

- 1 It is impossible to lick your elbow
- 2 If both parents have blue eyes their children will too
- 3 Human babies have over 70 more bones than an adult



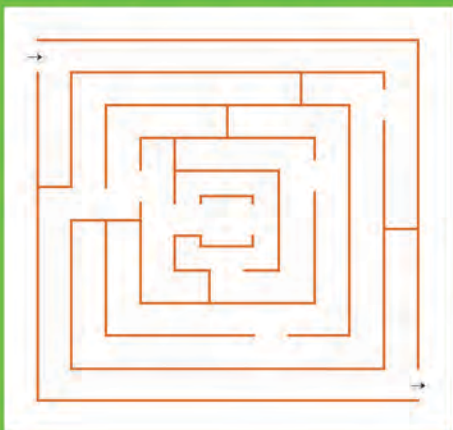
Wordsearch

Hidden in the grid are thirteen colours. Can you find them all?

- BLACK
- BLUE
- BROWN
- GREEN
- GREY
- INDIGO
- ORANGE
- PINK
- PURPLE
- SEPIA
- VIOLET
- WHITE
- YELLOW



Sami the squirrel has dropped his acorns, can you help him find them?



TRUE OR FALSE
1 True; 2 False; 3 True.

CROSSWORD
Across: 3 State; 6 Ard; 7 Back; 8 Banana; 13 Abroad; 14 Four; 15 Isle; 16 Least.
Down: 1 Samba; 2 Lions; 4 Tuba; 5 Tick; 9 Nib; 10 Boast; 11 Adder; 12 Lose; 13 Arms.

Solutions



Make life easier with MyTHH

Over 1000 of our tenants and leaseholders now manage their accounts through MyTHH, our online services portal. MyTHH gives you a live view of rent, service charge accounts and repairs on your property or estate, and allows you to manage most transactions online. With MyTHH you can:

- View your rent statements and balance
- View your leasehold account and invoices
- Log requests directly into THH's customer contact management system
- View current and previous repairs on your property and the communal areas of your block and estate
- Message us securely

You can sign up quickly and easily at my.thh.org.uk. Once your details are validated, you'll be automatically given a username and password. Then the rest is up to you. Sign up and make life easier with MyTHH.

Congratulations to Mr Kamal Uddin from Bethnal Green who was the lucky **iPad Winner** in our MyTHH competition.*

*MyTHH iPad competition ran from 01 June – 31 August 2017 and all eligible registrants to MyTHH between those dates were automatically entered into the draw, with one winner picked at random.



As a THH tenant or leaseholder your tenancy or lease agreement gives you rights. You also have responsibility to comply with your lease or tenancy conditions. Here are a few examples.

LEASEHOLDERS

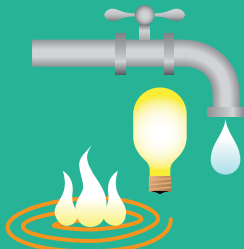
You can rent your property but remember to tell us how to contact you



Please get our permission before you make alterations to your property (building work)



Look after the plumbing, gas and electrics and we'll take care of the building

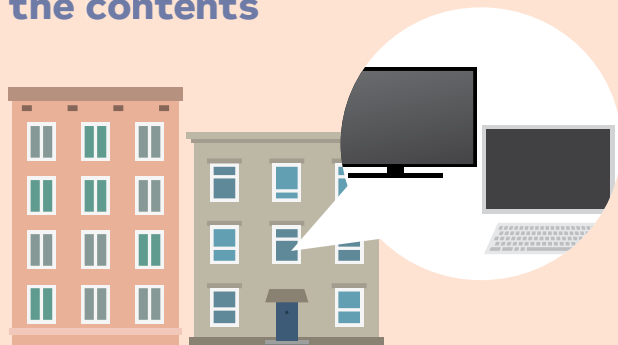


TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS

Be a good neighbour and tell us about those who aren't



We insure your buildings but you'll need to insure the contents



TENANTS

You can let out part of your home (but not all of it) to someone else but you'll need our permission



You can swap your home with another housing association or council tenant.