

Annual Report to Tenants 2018-19



Introduction

Our ambition has always been to have one of the best housing management services in London. This Annual Report gives an open, transparent and honest account of how the service is performing. In short, we are making progress but have a long way to go.

We have improved on several measures that matter to our residents such as anti-social behaviour, the responsiveness of our customer service and a very low eviction rate which are all credits to the service.

But it is not a rosy picture across the board and in the six months to September 2019, our response times for repairs have gone down. This is largely due to bringing those services back in house, but it does show that we still have a lot to do.

This is, after all, a marathon, not a sprint. It is easy to forget how new the service is because of the speed we have had to run. We are starting to see green shoots and I believe this is reflected by the fact that 60% of our tenants said that they were satisfied with the service overall - an increase on 52.4% last year.

But 60% is still quite low. It is unlikely to improve dramatically next year, or the year after, because of the historic underfunding of your estates.

Our seven-year capital programme investing £267m is therefore of paramount importance and it is likely that only after that will you feel the benefit.

Over the next year we will look to improve on the things that matter to you. I hope to see better statistics on repairs, anti-social behaviour and a strong implementation of our fire safety policy.

But we will also work with you to develop our approach to environmental sustainability, income and rent arrears and resident engagement.

Lastly I would like to thank all our residents who continue to give up their time to help us shape and improve aspects of our housing service. It is only through your unique insight and day-to-day experiences that we can be certain we are making decisions that work best for residents.

Cllr Kim Taylor-Smith

Deputy Leader, Grenfell, Housing and Property

Meeting the Government's standards

Like all local authority landlords, we are required to inform you, our tenants, about how we are meeting the Consumer Standards set by the Government's regulator of social housing.

These standards cover the areas of:

- Home
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Tenancy

This report gives an overview of the progress that we are making in these areas.

It covers the first 18 months since we took responsibility for managing your homes back from the **Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation**.

It also highlights some of our plans for the future.

How we are doing and where we need to improve

At the end of March 2019, 27 per cent of our council housing did not meet the Government's Decent Home Standard. This reflects historical under-investment in your homes. In our 2018 resident satisfaction survey only 58.4 per cent of our tenants said that they were satisfied with the quality of their home.

Following the hand-back of the housing management service to the Council in March 2018 improvements were made to our responsive repairs service, and we cleared a backlog of repairs. However, we still have a way to go before we match the top quartile (best performing) landlords in this area and increase overall resident satisfaction.

Performance measure	2018-19	Target 2018-19	April to Sept 2019
Average days to complete a responsive repair	15	11	15.7
Percentage of repair appointments kept	91.0%	—	89.6%
Percentage of residents satisfied with last repair	83.0%	85%	81.0%
Percentage of homes with a valid Landlords Gas Safety Certificate	99.97%	100%	99.98%
Percentage of homes not meeting the Government's Decent Homes Standard (Annual Measure)	27%	—	—

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2018

Tenants - How satisfied are you with the way the Council's Housing Management service deals with repairs and maintenance?	47.4%	—	—
Tenants - How satisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?	58.4%	—	—

Quality of homes – what we have done

- In 2018 we surveyed a sample of your homes to gather information on the general condition of every block and its communal areas. We used this information to develop a seven-year plan for investing £267m into your homes to bring them up to standard.
- The early years of the programme will focus on health and safety. This includes:
 - Work on the Silchester Estate and to Adair and Hazlewood Towers.
 - Work to replace and refurbish several of our most unreliable passenger lifts.
 - Work to replace failing communal heating and hot water systems that affect the services provided to residents in whole blocks of flats.
 - In March 2019 we selected a company to install 2,000 fire doors across the borough. This is the first phase of a three-year programme to replace 4,500 doors.
- We are spending an additional £18m on the development of the Lancaster West Estate. The government has also granted an additional £9.9m. This extra £27.9m almost doubles the amount available for development to £57.9m. We worked with residents to develop a new homes standard for the estate, which will both save money and make the estate more sustainable.

Repairs and maintenance – what we have done

- With the support of the Tenants Consultative Committee (TCC), a Task and Finish group was set up to look at our existing policy and to recommend improvements.
- We consulted with residents in early 2019 on a new repairs policy which was agreed by the Council’s Leadership team in July 2019. A plan is underway to implement the changes set out in the new policy; including Saturday working, extended office hours and a handyperson scheme.
- We took over the repairs service in April 2019 and we are now working to transform it into a high-quality service so we can improve resident satisfaction. This includes the introduction of a new repairs management system that will reorganise the repairs service and help manage the work in real-time. The first phase of this three phase rollout went live in December 2019.
- In July 2018 we launched a separate in-house repairs service for Lancaster West. As part of this we recruited a workforce to better reflect the community, with 14 per cent of staff from the Notting Dale area, and 19 per cent from North Kensington.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

How we are doing and where we need to improve

- Our 2018 resident satisfaction survey showed that only 41.4 percent of tenants felt that we listened to their views and acted upon them. This is a poor result compared to other landlords and a key area where we need to improve.
- During 2018-19 and the first half of 2019-20 our Customer Service Centre made improvements to the percentage of calls answered and the average speed of answering calls. Our focus remains on the quality of our call handling.
- Complaint levels fell in 2018-19, with 371 received in the year compared to 561 in 2017-18. Although the number reported in the first six months of 2019-20 shows an increase, it remains below previous years’ figures. Delays and the delivery of repairs remains a key feature of complaints. In addition to the drop in new complaints, there has been a decrease in the number of complaints escalated to Stage Two of our complaints process, and subsequently to Appeal Stage, reflecting improvements in the quality of investigations and responses.
- Whilst advances have been made across the service, at an average of 20 working days, the time taken to investigate and respond to complaints in 2018-19 remained high.

Performance measure	2018-19	Target 2018-19	April to Sept 2019
Customer Service Centre – percentage of calls answered	93.28%	90%	96.99%
Number of new complaints received	371	—	232
Average number of working days to respond to a Stage One complaint	20.0	12	14.9

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2018

Tenants - How satisfied are you that the Council's Housing Management Service listens to your views and acts upon them?	41.4%	—	—
Tenants - Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the service provided by the Council's Housing Management service?	52.4%	—	—

Customer service, choice and complaints – what we have done

- We worked with the Customer Service Task and Finish group to develop new complaints and compensation policies.
- We expanded the remit of our complaints team to include a responsibility for implementing learning from complaints across the organisation, looking closely at resident feedback, themes and local trends. We now call this the Customer Experience Team. As part of this, we recruited a new Customer Experience Manager and an additional Customer Experience Officer.
- Training and support has been given to key staff to help them focus on improving the quality of investigations and the speed of responses.

Involvement and empowerment – what we have done

We have worked with residents to improve and increase opportunities to get involved in decision making, including:

- Relaunching the Tenants' Consultative Committee (TCC).
- Establishing Task and Finish groups through the TCC, looking at service improvement in key areas including repairs, antisocial behaviour, the procurement of major works, estate services, workforce development, the leaseholder offer, and customer service.
- Involving residents in the staff recruitment process for several key positions.

- Launching a Consumer Panel that enables residents to provide useful and important feedback on the quality and performance of services.
- Launching Local Housing Meetings – quarterly meetings to update resident associations and compacts on our plans for delivering and improving services.
- Launching Homes Meetings for residents who have no formal attachment to resident associations.
- Holding our first Leaseholder Conference in July 2019.
- Setting up the Housing Matters (resident magazine) editorial group.
- Making changes to how our community centres are run, providing local resident associations the chance to take over day-to-day management of their local venue.
- Launching the Residents' Personal Development Academy, with the first training sessions taking place in the spring of 2019.
- Delivering a new series of roadshows across the borough, with the first taking place in June 2019.
- Launching our Residents Charter in the spring of 2019.
- Carrying out a resident satisfaction survey in 2018 to establish an overview of resident satisfaction with key services.

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of our tenants – what we have done

- Launched the Homecheck project in summer 2019, through which we aim to visit all tenants in their homes so that we can be sure they meet current health and safety and welfare standards. This will also help ensure that we have up-to-date details about who is living in each home. Knowing more about our tenants' circumstances increases our ability to build services to better meet their needs.
- Developed the Disability Forum, where residents and staff meet regularly to make sure that our services are accessible to disabled residents.
- Set up the internal Equalities Board, working across Housing Needs and Housing Management to ensure that equalities considerations are fully embedded in both departments.

Neighbourhood and Community

How we are doing and where we need to improve

In 2018 tenants' satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live was 71.8 per cent.

Issues noted included antisocial behaviour (e.g. noisy neighbours, litter, parking, drug related activity) and the quality of the estate services that we deliver.

Performance measure	2018-19	Target 2018-19	April to Sept 2019
Number of new antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases reported	376	—	141
Resident satisfaction with the handling of their ASB case	65.29%	75%	76.74%
Resident satisfaction with the internal cleaning service	74.63%	90%	73.35%
Resident satisfaction with the external cleaning service	74.92%	90%	79.03%
Resident satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service	87.13%	90%	84.01%

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2018

Tenants - How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	71.8%	—	—
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Neighbourhood management – what we have done

- We set up the Grounds Maintenance Procurement Group to develop new contracts for the service. Our existing contracts are due for renewal in 2020.
- We delivered environmental improvements identified by residents as part of a £750,000 Estate Improvement Fund.
- We worked with a Task and Finish Group to review the existing service provided by the Estate Services Officers, and agreed the basis of a new caretaking service due to start in early 2020. This will expand the existing service and include tasks such as caretakers carrying out minor repairs to communal areas. Caretakers will also have a greater onsite presence than at present.
- The Lancaster West neighbourhood team co-designed a three year local Neighbourhood Strategy, together with over 100 residents, to ensure outcomes are aligned with real needs of the local community.

Local area cooperation – what we have done

- We are active members of several joint working groups that address a range of issues affecting residents. These groups include the Joint Action Group (covering ASB and crime), MARAC (Multi agency referral assessment committee), Self Neglect and Hoarding Panel, and the Serious Youth Violence Panel.

Antisocial behaviour – what we have done

- The ASB Task and Finish group reviewed the existing antisocial behaviour policy, looked at best practice from elsewhere, and developed a set of new service standards. From this work we published a new ASB policy which went live in early summer 2019.
- We trained our staff to ensure they are clear on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and that they have the knowledge and skills to act when necessary.
- We developed a new management transfer policy and procedure to support resolving conflict.
- We evicted three households for antisocial behaviour in 2018-19 and have increased the number of enforcement and preventative actions undertaken.

How we are doing and where we need to improve

In 2017-18 the Council focused on rehousing the survivors and bereaved of the Grenfell Tragedy. In 2018-19 general lettings through the waiting list resumed.

- Due to the suspension of general lettings in 2017, a backlog of empty homes had built up and progress in re-letting these was slow. This is reflected in the average number of days it took to re-let a vacant home in 2018-19 which was significantly higher than the sector average.
- However, a detailed review of the process, and subsequent changes to team structures and workflows, resulted in a reduction in the number of empty homes between April and September 2019. We continue to work on improving outcomes in this area.
- The Grenfell Housing Services team has been formed to provide the best possible housing management services to the survivors and bereaved of the Grenfell Tragedy. This includes working with residents to develop the single Grenfell Housing Standard, and bespoke policies and procedures.
- An in-house repairs and handyperson service was also launched, working in partnership with the Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team.
- Following the rollout of Universal Credit across the borough, tenant rent arrears have continued to increase. This is reflective of trends across the sector.
- During 2018-19 there were 341 lettings to applicants on the housing register (excluding lettings to Grenfell bereaved and survivors). 16 percent of these lettings were to studio and one bedroomed properties.
- As at March 2019 there were 3,311 households on the Council's housing waiting list. The severe shortage of housing in the borough means that even people with a high priority are likely to wait for five years or more to be housed, and possibly longer for three bedroomed or larger homes.

Performance measure	2018-19	Target 2018-19	April to Sept 2019
Current tenant rent arrears, as a percentage of the annual rent debit	3.42%	3.10%	3.58%
Number of evictions for rent arrears	6	—	5
Average calendar days to re-let a vacant home (standard works)	167.8	—	166.6
Number of vacant and available to let homes (excluding Lancaster West regeneration)	134	—	80

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2018

Tenants - How satisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?	65.8%	—	—
Tenants - How satisfied are you that your service charge provides value for money?	57.5%	—	—

Allocations and mutual exchange – what we have done

- A co-designed Local Lettings Plan was agreed by the Council's Leadership team to provide security for residents from the Lancaster West Estate recovering from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We plan to sit down with residents in 2020 to review how this is working.
- We have produced a three-year Housing Strategy, bringing together in one place our commitments to improving housing services for residents of the borough, including our own tenants and leaseholders.
- As part of the strategy, we are proposing to spend in the region of £20 million buying back ex-Council properties on our estates for use as social housing and temporary accommodation. As part of our capital investment plan we also intend to build 600 brand new homes in the borough with at least 300 of them being for social rent.
- In early 2020 we will be working on a review of the Allocations Scheme, asking residents, local Members and other important agencies what they think our priorities should be when we allocate social housing. We will also be publishing a draft Homelessness Strategy for consultation, with the intention to implement a final strategy in spring 2020.
- We continue to be members of the mutual exchange website, 'Homeswapper', which our tenants can register with free of charge. Thirty-one mutual exchanges took place in 2018-19.

Tenure – what we have done

- Following feedback from tenants we took the decision in July 2019 to reintroduce secure tenancies, meaning that all Council tenants will be given a lifetime tenancy and ending the use of fixed term tenancies. This will be implemented in 2020.
- We have developed links with Step Change, a debt management charity. Step Change has undertaken training with the Rent Income team to enable officers to better support and advise residents struggling to manage debts. Our officers can refer residents to the charity, which provides legal advice and support with setting out debt management plans and contacting debtors.
- Following a review of our process to re-let empty homes we created a new Lettings Team to help address performance issues. This team will provide coordination and act as a bridge between the Allocations Team and the various Housing Management teams involved in the management and re-letting of empty homes.

Notes