

Housing Services report
Quarter one – April to June 2017



Housing management and fire safety

Introduction

In the early hours of Wednesday 14 June 2017 a fire started at the residential block Grenfell Tower, in Kensington. It is still too early to know the cause of the fire or why it spread so quickly throughout the block, claiming so many lives. The London Fire Brigade along with other agencies are undertaking formal investigations and the findings of these will be shared with us and other landlords of similar properties. There will also be a public inquest which will look into what happened on the day and the causes of the fire.

None of our medium and high rise blocks have similar cladding to Grenfell Tower. All of our recent work to bring homes up to the Lambeth Housing Standard (LHS) has installed cladding which is fundamentally different.

All Lambeth Housing structures have an up to date fire risk assessment. We have an action plan in place to complete all the remedial actions identified. Hardwired smoke and heat detectors installed under LHS works are tested when gas servicing is undertaken on an annual basis by our technical services team. Where flats do not have a gas supply they are not tested and there is a reliance on residents to report defects and test the equipment.

What actions have we taken?

As part of a wider investigation by the government, we are carrying out further investigations on all of our fully and partially-clad blocks. Lambeth has 122 medium/high rise blocks (six storeys and above), of which 31 have some form of cladding. We have sent samples from the 31 buildings to be tested as part of the government investigations and we are waiting for the results. We are also conducting our own more rigorous testing on the cladding from the 31 blocks.

Our housing teams are undertaking fire safety estate walkabouts every week until further notice. More information about the estates that they will be visiting can be found in the 'Wednesday Walkabout' section below. '

We regularly review our fire safety processes in partnership with the London Fire Brigade; these are available to be viewed on our [website](#).

With regards to the reports of one building in Lambeth having cladding that has failed fire safety testing, the building in question is one built, owned and managed by Network Homes, a housing association, rather than a Lambeth Council housing block. The London Fire Brigade carried out a full fire safety inspection of the building on Saturday 24 June and has confirmed that because of its multiple up-to-date fire safety features the building does not need to be vacated.

There is also currently a 24 hour walking watch at Southwyck House until the building's cladding is removed completely in September. Residents are being kept up-to-date with developments and written guidance has been provided.

We identified issues with fire doors not closing properly at Brittany Point estate as part of our recent inspections. Door closures for all residents have now been replaced by our repairs contractor so that they now meet the required standard.

Housing management and fire safety

What precautions can you take to stay safe?

Have at least one working smoke alarm in your home, ideally situated on the ceiling outside the kitchen. A smoke alarm is the easiest way to alert you to a fire, giving you time to escape.

Always keep a working battery in your smoke alarm. Keep them dust-free and test them once a week to check they still work.

Think about how you could escape quickly and safely if there is a fire in your home and keep all exit routes clear.

Keep communal areas free. It is important to keep communal areas like corridors, walkways and exit doors clear so that if there is a fire, residents can evacuate the building quickly and safely and so the fire brigade will be able to reach your property without obstacles in the way.

Don't overload electrical sockets. Only use one plug per socket.

Take extra care when cooking with hot oil. Consider buying a deep-fat fryer which is controlled by a thermostat.

Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly and are disposed of carefully. Never smoke in bed.

Keep matches and lighters away from children.

Do not leave electrical appliances on standby. Always switch them off and unplug them when not in use.

If there is a fire in your building, and you are not at risk

Stay inside your home if you do not know where the fire is.

Close your front door and your windows to stop smoke entering into your home.

Listen for instructions from the Fire Brigade. They will direct you to a safe location, if you need to evacuate your home.

If you feel threatened by fire or smoke and it is safe to leave your home, leave the building by the emergency exit, closing your front door behind you. **Do not use a lift.**

If you are cut off by fire

Try to remain calm. **Alert people** in the home.

Close the door and use towels or similar to block any gaps to help stop smoke spreading into the room.

Try to make your way to a window.

If the room becomes smoky, crawl along the floor as smoke rises.

Open the window. This will allow smoke to escape and provide you with fresh air.

Call 999 and give as much detail as possible about the fire, including the property number and floor of property.

We are currently offering free battery-operated smoke alarms to residents in high-rise blocks who request them. Please contact HMfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk for more details.

Information about 'what to look out for in your building' and what to do in the event of a fire can be found on the London Fire Brigade's [website](#).

Resident engagement

The council has recently agreed to change its engagement structures to provide more of a focus on service improvements as well as a more streamlined structure (as previously there were 12 area forums).

To achieve this, three **Area Boards** (north, central and south) are being set up to concentrate not just on service improvement but on monitoring the area offices' and contractors' performance. One way the representatives will be able to monitor performance is through estate action plans. The estate action plan will be a record of works required or improvements that have been identified by residents, staff members, Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) representatives or Members. It is intended to be a joint plan between the estate housing officer and TRA representatives. It will explain what can and can't be done on estates and identify timescales.

Registered **TRAs** will be entitled to send a representative but we will also be looking for other interested residents whose properties aren't covered by TRAs (particularly street properties) to get involved. The first boards are planned to meet in October and training will be provided to those who volunteer.

If you would like further information please contact gettinginvolved@lambeth.gov.uk.

Lambeth 500+

The Lambeth 500+ is a consultative group, free to join for any resident who receives services from Lambeth Housing Management. Members are contacted by e-mail and text and are able to provide feedback on the housing management issues that they are most interested in.

New members have joined the Lambeth 500+ in the last quarter and we now have 820 members that we can consult with.

If you would like to become a member of the Lambeth 500+ you can e-mail lambeth500@lambeth.gov.uk.

The table below shows the topics that we have consulted on in the first three months of this financial year.

What we have consulted on – April to June 2017	What happened?	
 Homeownership Services inbox	In May we asked members of the Lambeth 500+ leaseholder panel for their opinion on the current automated e-mail response used by Homeownership Services. This is an e-mail which is generated when an enquiry is sent to the departmental inbox.	We used the feedback provided by members to update the information in the automated response. The outcome was a response that better suited the needs of homeowners.
 Homeownership Services homeowners' guide	As part of the ongoing work into changing the communications sent by Homeownership Services, we are creating a new, easy to read, homeowners' guide, primarily aimed at new homeowners.	Members were sent a draft version of the guide asking them what they thought of the content and for their feedback. This was a valuable exercise as homeowners were able to influence the content of the guide during its early development.

Lambeth 500+

Planned Consultation activity

The table below provides information about the issues that we plan to consult on in quarter two of the year (July to September).

Our plans	What are we going to be asking?	Delivery date
 Lambeth 500+ members' contact details	We want to reach more of our members by e-mail and text. As part of wanting to engage more members electronically, we plan to write to members to get e-mail addresses or mobile numbers where we don't currently have them. This will allow us to reach our membership base more regularly.	July 2017
 Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	This will be a programme of work around ASB led by the area offices to review how we respond to ASB issues and complaints. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lambeth 500+ members will get to have their say on existing and developing practices around ASB• A workshop will take place focusing on ASB, which will be held in the north area. Additionally, we will create a Lambeth 500+ virtual panel around ASB to challenge issues and encourage better practice.	July/August 2017
 Lambeth 500+ Twitter/social media	We intend to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask members to feedback on the perceived value of having a social media presence.• Create social media profiles which have the type of content that the Lambeth 500+ membership want.	August 2017
 Annual Lambeth 500+ survey	We will be developing a survey to find out what members think about being part of the Lambeth 500+. We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask Lambeth 500+ members to complete the survey• Ask members what future projects the Lambeth 500+ should do.	September 2017

Introduction

In 2015 we introduced our 'Wednesday Walkabouts' to provide a more visible presence on your estate. Housing staff and contractors visit a different estate every two weeks to talk with residents about issues that are important to them. They report repairs and cleaning problems to our contractors to help us provide a better service. We have set out below an update on the walkabouts that have been carried out recently by the north, central, and south area teams.

In response to Grenfell Tower fire, we are focusing on fire safety and until further notice there will be fire safety walkabouts focusing on the 31 blocks that have some form of cladding. We will continue to collect information about other issues and get residents' feedback on how the services we are providing such as estate cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Planned walkabouts

North area

Duffell House,
Silverburn House;
Matheson Lang Gardens
and Waylett House

16 August

Hampson Way
Dovet Court
Sedley House
Edward House
Romayne House
Lynde House
Windmill Hse

6 September

Central area

Canterbury Gardens
Estate-
Chartham Court

9 August

Notre Dame estate

16 August

South area

Valley Road estate

23 August

North area walkabouts

North area office staff along with other attendees carried out a walkabout on Spurgeon estate on 7 June. Colleagues were divided into teams which concentrated on estate inspections, a general estate walkabout and door-to-door visits. The caretaking team also focussed on carrying out aesthetic improvements around the estate.

Repairs were identified and logged on the action plan to be followed up by the estate housing officer. Some 315 properties were visited and 30 residents met were willing to provide feedback for a customer survey. The highest level of satisfaction was with the standard of cleaning on the estate, with 83 per cent of respondents satisfied. However, only 30 per cent said that they were satisfied with the repairs carried out on the estate. This feedback will be logged on the estate action plan which will be available to view on the housing management website.

Central area walkabouts

The central area carried out a walkabout at Southwyck House and Somerleyton Road on 28 June.

They spoke to a number of residents who provided their feedback about our services. For the majority of residents spoken to, estate cleaning was the most important priority and an area where the majority of residents reported positive satisfaction.

Refuse collection was stated as an area that needed improvement, with more provision to recycle being mentioned as a particular suggestion. The results of the survey will be used to develop an estate action plan for the estate.

South area walkabouts

Staff and other volunteers undertook a walkabout at Mountearl and Adare Walk estate on 31 May 2017. They spoke to over 60 people whilst on the estate.

The feedback was generally positive. Residents were very happy with the grounds maintenance; however, more attention is needs to be paid to estate cleaning. There were also concerns raised regarding ASB which is being addressed through the estate action plan.

Colleagues picked up several issues regarding entrances and access on the estates. The issues identified from the walkabout will be sent to the responsible teams to ensure that action is taken to resolve them.



Homeownership Services

Lambeth

Introduction

We have taken on board homeowners' feedback about their experiences of Homeownership Services and we want to improve the services that we provide. This section updates you on the steps that we are taking to ensure that we deliver excellent services for homeowners. We are committed to consulting with homeowners on our improvement initiatives through the Lambeth 500+.

2016/17 Actual service charges

Work is well underway to produce the actual service charges for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The mailing will be posted to you in September 2017.

If we have over-estimated the day-to-day annual service charges, you will receive a credit on your account, which you may claim back as a refund (if your account is up-to-date) or leave on your account to assist in offsetting future monthly service charges or the cost of future major works. If we have underestimated the charges, you will receive an additional invoice, which you should pay within 28 days. If you are unable to do so, you must contact our service charge collection team upon receipt of the invoice to discuss your service charge account.



Homeowners' guide

Work is underway to create a new homeowners' guide and the first draft was shared with the Lambeth 500+ on the week commencing 26 June.



We want to ensure we have a guide that really helps our homeowners, so once we've received initial feedback from the Lambeth 500+ we will also be arranging some drop-in sessions with Lambeth 500+ leaseholders to get ideas and feedback. Once finalised the guide will be available as an online and downloadable document.

Managing telephone calls



Following the implementation of the call reporting tool, Tiger Prism in April 2017 we are now able to monitor and manage our inbound/outbound calls more efficiently.

We have seen a significant increase in our call performance over the last three months with the department answering 56 per cent of its calls in April 2017 to now answering 74 per cent of its call in June. In addition, 80 per cent of our calls were answered within 10 seconds. It is clear we still need to improve in this area, and we will continue to utilise the tool to drive improvements in our performance.

More appointments available

Following the piloting of the appointment service, we received a lot of positive feedback from our homeowners outlining how useful they found it. It was evident that the ability for our customers to speak to HOS officers face to face is highly valued. Given this, and to further improve engagement with our customers, we are now offering a drop in service for homeowners at the Customer Service Centre at Olive Morris House. This went live at the beginning of May and was promoted on Love Lambeth (our news website) and also in our correspondence to homeowners. We are also planning to further publicise the service in the Lambeth Talk newsletter which will go out to approximately 131,000 households.



The service operates from 9am to 5pm and customers do not need an appointment to be seen. Based at the centre will be officers from the customer services team, collections team and a team leader or manager from Homeownership Services. Members of the collections team will be available to give advice about service charges, invoices and ways to pay. Our customer service officers will be able to assist homeowners with a broad range of homeownership enquires.

Homeownership Services

Service charges and major works income

Quarter one in 2017/18 has seen the most successful period on record for service charge and major works income. The success is based on the continuous improvement in performance of the calculations and monitoring team which led to us successfully issuing the 2017/18 major works and service charges invoices before 1 April for the first time in a number of years.

Over the next three months, we will be developing our arrears escalation policy on our housing customer relationship system Northgate. This will streamline the arrears process and will result in further improvements in income collection.



Website developments

As part of our strategy for digital transformation, we have been developing the content on the housing management website, which will be rolled out to the Lambeth 500+ in July 2017 for testing and feedback. Depending on the results, we plan to roll out the new website by the end of the second quarter (August). Many of the services we offer are transactional, meaning that the services allow the exchange of information and/or money between Lambeth residents and the council. We have introduced several new ways for homeowners to engage with us making the variety of different services we offer more accessible, flexible and convenient for our customers.



Lambeth Homeowner e-newsletter

We issued our second e-newsletter to homeowners on 16 June 2017. The feedback once again has been very positive, and homeowners appear to be finding the information useful. The open rate for our newsletter is more than double it is for the, council's other main publications.

Over the coming months, we want to build on the number of e-mail addresses we have from homeowners to ensure we continue to reach as many residents as possible.



Introduction

Welcome to the first quarterly performance briefing for 2017/18. The briefing will include results for the quarter on seven of our key performance indicators. The table on the right shows that we reached or exceeded our targets on six out of seven of our key performance indicators shown.

Our priorities for improving Housing Services for residents 2017/18

Our priorities for 2017/18 reflect our commitment to preventing homelessness and supplying temporary accommodation where our citizens require it. We are maintaining our focus on repairs as we know that they are a priority for all residents. We are currently undertaking a number of improvement initiatives in Homeownership Services therefore leaseholder satisfaction remains a key indicator.

Lambeth Housing Service priorities 2017/18:

- Preventing homelessness and managing temporary accommodation
- Developing repairs and estate services
- Improving services for homeowners
- Widening engagement with residents

Table 1. Performance against corporate key performance indicators April to June 2017

Key outcomes	2017/18 quarter 1 target	Quarter 1 performance
Satisfaction		
Tenant satisfaction with Housing Services	70%	69.7%
Leaseholder satisfaction with Housing Services	43%	43.6%
Satisfaction with grounds maintenance and estate cleaning	70%	75.7%
Income collection		
Rent collection rate in-year	98.5%	98.6%
Call handling		
Calls answered within 20 seconds	80	85.7%
Housing needs		
Number of households where homelessness was prevented	425	441
Number of households in temporary accommodation	2,250	2,020

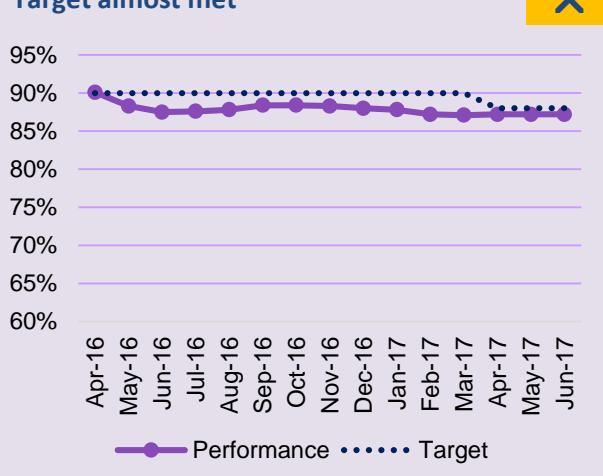
The corporate performance measures above are supported by a much broader set of over 100 detailed performance measures which we use to monitor and help manage the effectiveness of our services. This wider set of measures report in detail on all of our services including income collection, repairs, estates management, and call centre performance. Each quarter we will present a detailed focus on performance in one of those service areas.

Summary of performance highlights

Percentage of residents satisfied with the quality of repairs

Satisfaction levels have increased by 0.1 percentage points between quarter four of last year (2016/17) and quarter one of this year. The quarter one figure is 0.8 percentage points below the 88 per cent target. Whilst satisfaction is just below target, all of the repairs key performance indicators are above target and progressing well.

Target almost met



Housing Services' performance report

Leaseholder satisfaction with Housing Services

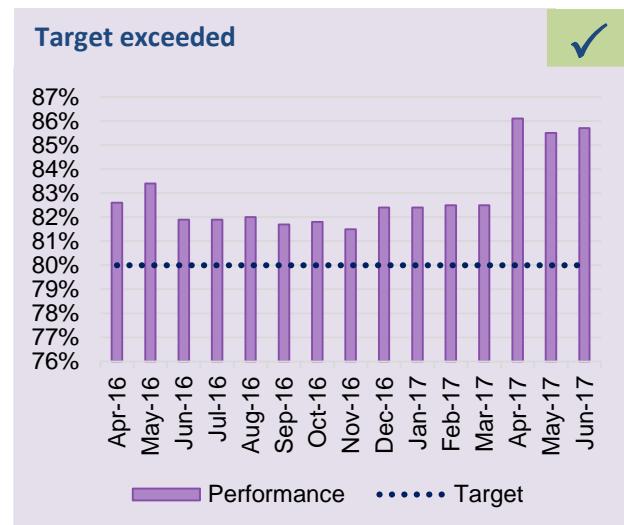
This financial year we have a higher target for leaseholder satisfaction of 43 per cent. In this first quarter that target has been achieved with a performance of 43.6 per cent. This is comparable to the first three months of 2016/17 when leaseholder satisfaction was 43.2 per cent. There has been a small decrease in leaseholder satisfaction compared to quarter four of the last financial year.

Various improvements have been taking place across Homeownership Services. One of the biggest changes made is introducing a drop in facility for homeowners. Other positive changes include the quarterly HOS newsletter that keeps homeowners up-to-date on the various projects being carried out to increase customer engagement and deliver an all-round better service.

Satisfaction with grounds maintenance and estate cleaning

Satisfaction with grounds maintenance and estate cleaning was consistently above the 70 per cent target in 2016/17. At its highest point there was a 77.2 per cent level of satisfaction. Overall satisfaction with estates services improved slightly over the 2016/17 year-end target (by 0.3 per cent) Further analysis indicates that residents are highly satisfied with grounds maintenance (82 per cent) and remain reasonably satisfied with estates cleaning (69 per cent).

This trend has continued in the first three months of 2017/18 as at the end of the quarter, satisfaction with the measure stands at 75.7 per cent.



Housing Services' performance report

Rent collection rate in-year

Quarter one performance was marginally above the profiled target of 98.5 per cent. This represents a solid first quarter out-turn and leaves us well placed to meet and exceed our year-end target.



Number of households in temporary accommodation

At the end of quarter one there were 2,020 households in temporary accommodation. Occupation levels increased by one per cent in quarter one when compared to the previous quarter, and by one per cent when compared to quarter one of 2016/17. Factors that helped to reduce the need for temporary accommodation included, new placement demand in quarter one similar to levels reported in the previous quarter; the number of households leaving temporary accommodation in quarter one exceeded the number of households placed; over 200 families who might otherwise have made a homeless application were helped to remain in their existing home, or to find alternative accommodation through a range of homeless prevention actions.



Number of households where homelessness was prevented

Over 441 prevention outcomes were secured in quarter one, above target for the quarter, by 13 per cent when compared to the previous quarter, and up by 15 per cent when compared to quarter one of 2016/17. Sustained high levels of homeless prevention performance are holding down temporary accommodation occupation levels, and the number of households accepted as homeless. Prevention actions mainly focus on households in priority need who would otherwise make a homeless application and require temporary accommodation in the long term.

