

Annual Report to Tenants 2019-20



**Housing
Management**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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Introduction

Since we took back control of the management of your homes, our goal has been to deliver one of the best housing management services in the country. This Annual Report provides you with an honest account of how we are performing.

In March 2019 we launched our Council Plan, which was finalised and published after consultation with over 2,000 RBKC residents. It sets out our priorities as a Council over the next four years.

Having consulted with residents, we have developed the Council's Housing Strategy, which sets out our vision and priorities in housing over the next three years. We've submitted planning permission to build 94 new homes across four sites in the north of the borough. They first four sites have received planning permission. This is part of our New Homes Programme which will provide 600 new homes of which at least 300 will be for social rent. We've also worked with you to develop our approach to various other strategies and policies.

Our plans included visiting every Council home in the borough so that we can be sure that they meet health, safety and welfare standards, as well as ensuring that we have the most up to date details about who is living in the property. These plans have been hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic but work is still going on in the background – we are still working on gathering this information. Carrying out the regular gas and electrical safety checks to make sure you are safe, is also of paramount importance.

Phase two of the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell tragedy is underway and we are continuing to do all we can to assist. We've signed the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy, which commits the Council to put the public interest above our reputation. We have agreed to implement all of the Public Inquiry recommendations. Grenfell is a tragedy that should not have happened and one that can never happen again.



Cllr Kim Taylor-Smith



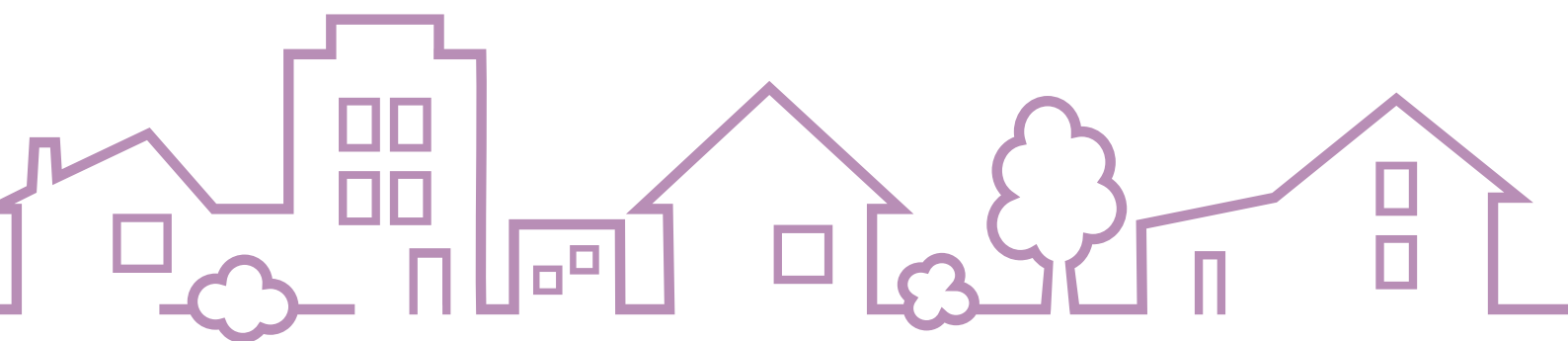
This year has been unlike any other. The whole world has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to make sure we minimise the impact it has on our communities. You have continued to step up to support vulnerable and shielding residents with food deliveries and medical supplies or volunteered with the local volunteer centre. We need to continue to work together to reduce the spread of the virus in Kensington and Chelsea and ensure that we support each other during the undoubtedly difficult winter to come.

As a result of the pandemic we have had to change the way we work, and this has brought opportunities as well as challenges. This includes everything from setting up brand new services, most notably a service hub to deal with Covid-19, to moving to digital engagement. At the moment, we cannot have face-to-face meetings, due to the pandemic. Housing Management hosted its first online meeting, the Tenants Consultative Committee, in May, and has continued to organise online meetings since, supporting residents where necessary to access the technology. This has allowed us to reach a greater audience when engaging on our plans for the future. We will expand and develop our digital engagement through our new resident involvement strategy and continue to reach out to ensure all our residents have opportunities to be involved and engaged.

Please remain vigilant and stay safe.

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:



Tenant
Involvement and
Empowerment



Home



Neighbourhood
and Community



Tenancy

This report gives an overview of the progress that we are making in these areas. It covers the financial year 2019-2020. It also highlights some of our plans for the future.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

How we are doing and where we need to improve

- Our customer service team received 94,303 calls from customers this year, as opposed to 93,953 calls in 2018-19, and answered just over 96 per cent of them. This figure takes us over our target of 92.5 per cent for this year.
- Answering your calls got speedier too. More than 71 per cent were answered within 30 seconds. Both sets of figures are an improvement on last year.
- Another positive outcome is in our response to complaints. Last year we responded within an average of 20 days, this year we have improved that figure to 15 days. Stage one complaints answered within target showed a significant improvement – up from 60 per cent last year to 87.63 per cent and a drop in the number of complaints escalated to stage two dropped from 25 last year to just 12 this year.

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2019

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Tenants - How satisfied are you that the Council's Housing Management Service listens to your views and acts upon them?	41.4%	47.0%	-
Tenants - Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the service provided by the Council's Housing Management service?	52.4%	60.0%	-

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Customer Service Centre – percentage of calls answered	93.28%	96.06%	92.5%
Number of new complaints received	371	369	-
Average number of working days to respond to a Stage One complaint	20.0	15.2	<=15

Customer service, choice and complaints – what we have done

- We worked with you to develop a new compensation policy. We discussed the policy at the Tenants’ Consultative Committee, the Homes Group and the Customer Services Task and Finish group and consulted with residents’ associations. The changes we made include changes in compensation amounts, compensation for lift failures, timescales for claims, how compensation is paid, and specifying what is ‘reasonable’ notice for cancelling an appointment.
- All the complaints are analysed by the Customer Experience Team on a weekly basis, to ensure that we learn from them and any lessons learned feed into our service improvement plan.
- The Council launched its Customer Access Strategy, which will be delivered in the next year.

Involvement and empowerment – what we have done

Residents are at the heart of what we do and we welcome opportunities for involvement in decision making. This year:

- Residents have been involved in helping the Council to develop its workforce to meet the challenges ahead. A Task and Finish group of Tenants’ Consultative Committee (TCC) representatives was set up to look at areas such as professional training and staff development. Other meetings held over the year with residents include subjects such as ASB, the Grounds Maintenance contract, the Tenancy conditions review, and the Resident Engagement Strategy.
- Residents have been involved in the recruitment process, helping to prepare a pool of interview questions, conducting interviews alongside Council staff and agreeing which candidates to employ. Residents also contributed to a film about living in RBKC – made by a resident and shown as part of the induction for new staff.
- We have worked with residents to agree the performance heading that we report on three times a year at the Local Area Housing Meetings.
- Last October, we held our first Residents’ Summit, which over 200 residents attended. The positive changes that have taken place since the management of your homes returned to the Council were mentioned in residents’ speeches. Planned and designed with residents, the Summit was a key step in developing a shared vision for housing in the borough. The renowned architect and local resident, George Clarke, who attended the event, spoke passionately about the importance of social housing. The summit was also opportunity to discuss areas that need improvement.

- We've also organised a series of Homeowner online seminars – over 400 leaseholders joined us for a range of short films and discussion on various topics.
- We invited residents to participate in interviewing bidders for new maintenance contractors to carry out repairs, maintenance and other works in your homes.
- We have written to just over 3000 households about Mechanical and Electrical and other major works projects.
- Following the removal of the external wall Insulation, we've consulted and worked closely with residents in Adair and Hazlewood Towers on the design and installation of its replacement. Construction enabling work is expected to start in late-summer 2020 and to be complete in the later part of 2021.
- We are testing four electronic noticeboards in the lift lobby areas of blocks on the Silchester estate, to display up-to-date information about your home, estate and local area, but also local information such as weather updates and live bus countdown timetables. More noticeboards are coming on the Lancaster West Estate.
- We have introduced the option to arrange a virtual appointment with your Neighbourhood Management Team via smartphone, tablet or PC, to ensure that we all remain safe while adhering by the social distancing rules.
- Our resident engagement team have supported many residents to get online – and ensure online meeting are accessible – over 42 online meetings with residents have been held to date.
- On Lancaster West, we have developed a sustainability vision and strategy with residents, to become a carbon neutral estate by 2030. Achievements so far include a 100 per cent electric fleet, HotBin composters in community gardens, smart thermostats as standard, and 10-year LED spotlights.
- We have recruited a workforce that better reflects the community with 12 per cent of staff being residents of Notting Dale, and 18 per cent being residents of North Kensington overall. With representation from the whole community, the team is able to deliver services in 18 community languages, saving £10k per month in equivalent translation fees.

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

Following consultation with residents earlier this year, the Council has launched a new website. In Housing Management, we have reviewed the structure of our webpages and simplified it. The focus was to make sure that they are easier to navigate, transact with and use. We have reviewed our content and improved it. Accessibility has also been improved, making it easier for residents with impairments to use across a range of devices and browsers. You may still notice a hint of the old website when carrying out various tasks, for example, our Capital Works pages. We know that there are still improvements to be made and the new website is still very much a work in progress.

How we are doing and where we need to improve

The 2019 Resident Satisfaction survey showed that tenant satisfaction with our repairs service increased by 2.5 per cent when compared with the previous year's results. Changes to the service structure and a new IT system for managing repairs led to an increase in resident satisfaction (via transactional surveys) later in the year, and it is anticipated this will continue into 2020-21.

Tenant satisfaction with the overall quality of homes saw a marginal increase between 2018 and 2019, reflecting historic under-investment in our homes. With the launch of the capital works programme, we believe that we can make a positive difference in the coming years in this area.

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2019

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Tenants - How satisfied are you with the way the Council's Housing Management service deals with repairs and maintenance?	47.4%	50.0%	-
Tenants - How satisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?	58.4%	59.0%	-

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Average days to complete a responsive repair	15.0	13.9	-
Percentage of repair appointments kept	91.0%	90.9%	95%
Percentage of residents satisfied with last repair	83.0%	79.3%	85%
Percentage of homes with a valid Landlords Gas Safety Certificate	99.97%	99.97%	100%

Quality of homes – what we have done

- The Council's £267 million capital works programme has begun. We've recruited extra technical staff to the Property Services team to increase our inhouse expertise in managing the works. We've expanded our major works team and invested in new computer software to help manage major construction projects. We've been working with residents as part of a procurement panel to make sure that there are enough contractors and technical consultants in place to get the work done.
- To overcome the restrictions on public meetings, we've worked with Resident Associations via conferencing apps. Together we have developed a new approach to consulting on major works. We have agreed to talk to residents about our approach and changes that they might want to see in the way we consult.
- At the moment, we are installing four lifts across the Hazelwood and Adair towers. In 2021 we have a large volume of lifts we are preparing to programme with actual dates to be confirmed once processes and suppliers have been confirmed as correct. We are hoping to roll out more than 10 lifts in 2021.
- In November 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 5,000 fire rated door sets. With the support of our supply chain partners, our residents and without compromising Health and Safety we have continued to work where we can throughout the pandemic on this important safety issue. This continued effort has meant we have been able to renew 1600 flat entrance and communal door sets that required replacement in locations such as across: Silchester Towers, Portobello and the Cremorne Estates.
- In the next financial year, we will begin 27 new projects, which will include new windows and roofs, and improvements to the external fabric of buildings.
- Throughout the pandemic we've continued working to maintain an effective service to keep you safe in your homes and support our more vulnerable residents. With some Government restrictions lifted, we tentatively opened our public reception at 292a Kensal Road in the summer with new safety measures in place. The reception is open for appointments only for the time being to allow us to resolve complex matters that cannot be dealt with by phone or email.
- We have developed a new home standard with over 150 residents on Lancaster West estate, which includes safety measures such as removing remove gas from properties, radio-linked fire alarms and the installation of fire-resistant internal doors. 10 per cent of tenanted homes have now been refurbished to this standard, and satisfaction with these homes stands at 92 per cent.

Repairs and maintenance – what we have done

- Resident satisfaction with the repairs service ended the year at just under 80 per cent. There have been improvements in the number of repairs completed in one visit and emergency repairs completed within target. However, other key areas have not seen significant change since last year. Recent changes to the structure of the service and the embedding of our new IT system has resulted in increased resident satisfaction, bringing it to 85 per cent for the month of March 2020, although we are aware that satisfaction dropped initially with the introduction of this system at the end of last year.
- The lockdown has had an impact on how we deliver this service. We prioritised emergency repairs only, in April. We have tackled the repairs that we were unable to do during lockdown so that we can get your homes back in top condition. Plus, we have embraced new ways of working, such as holding virtual meetings, providing services remotely and making wider use of the technology available to us.
- We have launched an in-house repairs and handyperson service, working in partnership with the Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team. We are also planning to roll out a communal repairs team to improve the speed of repairs and satisfaction.
- On Lancaster West, the in-house repairs team, launched in July 2018, has undertaken over 5000 repairs in that time. Between July 2018 and March 2020, the average repairs turnaround reduced from 30 working days to four days, making it one of the quickest repairs services in the UK. Satisfaction in 20/21 is 90 per cent, year to date - up from last year. Some 93 per cent of repairs are now done in-house rather than through outside contractors, saving money whilst improving the quality of service to residents, who also benefit from a discretionary handyperson service.



Neighbourhood and Community

How we are doing and where we need to improve

A total of 1,984 residents completed satisfaction surveys for grounds maintenance and cleaning services during the year. Respondents reported satisfaction levels of 83.25 per cent with grounds maintenance, 77.14 per cent for external cleaning and 74.74 per cent for internal cleaning. Results varied across our estates and we are reviewing this feedback to identify areas for improvement.

Your satisfaction with handling antisocial behaviour cases stands at 65 per cent. We recognise that we need to improve – this is why we’re bringing in specialist ASB staff to add expertise to the team and ensure better monitoring and outcomes. We continue to carry out enforcement action on cases that we have been unable to resolve through informal measures, such as warning letters, third party referrals and mediation. For 2019-20 these actions included four acceptable behaviour agreements, nine Notices of Seeking Possession, seven injunctions served, and one eviction.

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2019

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Tenants - How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?	71.8%	74.0%	-

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Number of new antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases reported	376	207	-
Resident satisfaction with the handling of their ASB case	65.29%	64.56%	>=70%
Resident satisfaction with the internal cleaning service	74.63%	74.74%	90%
Resident satisfaction with the external cleaning service	74.92%	77.14%	90%
Resident satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service	87.13%	83.25%	90%

Launch of the Covid-19 Hub

The Covid-19 Hub, which was set up as part of the Government's Local Support Scheme for the 2.2 million people identified by the NHS nationally as being "clinically vulnerable", is a one stop shop where residents, can request food, medical supplies and other support to get them through this difficult time. It's also a point of contact for residents who are not shielding but are otherwise vulnerable due to the Coronavirus and need some support.

Many Housing Management staff have been redeployed from their regular roles to work at the Hub. Repairs operatives set aside their day job to respond to requests for food parcels. Their vehicles and knowledge of our borough proved invaluable in enabling us to deliver more than 400 food parcels directly to the doors of residents. Staff from other areas have been redeployed to make essential welfare calls to residents.

Our welfare calls have offered a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable members of our community – making them feel safe, supported and cared for during this time of crisis. This team set about making calls to every one of the 3654 residents noted as vulnerable due to their age or other vulnerability, making sure they had what they needed, even if it was just to know someone was checking they were OK – and even if that was at the weekend.

The team made contact with more than 3,151 residents, made more than 350 Welfare calls referrals and signposted residents to partner organisations such as Age UK, K&C Forum, Covid-19 Hub, Under 65 Foodbank, and the NHS Volunteer Scheme who delivered food, collected medicines or helped with shopping. They also arranged essential repairs, financial support and importantly, they helped deal with the loneliness and isolation during lockdown. The team are still providing a call back service for those who require support.

Neighbourhood management – what we have done

- We set up the Grounds Maintenance Procurement Group who assisted us in renewing our contracts. A steering group of 12 resident members made up of leaseholders and tenants met over several months, went on visits and had homework. We held regular meetings throughout the procurement process. This group helped us draw up the specification of works and the standards which the contractors should attain. They were also involved in drawing up the standards for the monitoring of the maintenance works and the penalties for failures to perform. This was to make sure that the contract reflects the service residents want to see. We also had a smaller core group made up of two tenants and one leaseholder. They were part of the interview panel for the tendering contractors and carried out site visits to all the tendering contractors. Their scores for each of these elements were included in the overall scores contributing to the successful contractors.
- Satisfaction with cleaning is going the right way as well with rates increasing for internal and external cleaning. However, we are still below our target and we are working on providing you with the best service we possibly can. For this reason, we are consulting with you on your experience of the current cleaning service to your block, and your views on what aspects of the service you would like to see improved.

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. These partnerships are focused on keeping residents safe and deterring ASB.
- We have set up the Estate Improvement Budget to give you a direct input into how your local environment is enhanced. We have a considerable amount of money to spend on estate improvements based on the size of your estate and the number of households. Currently we have undertaken many projects across residents' homes including security works such as CCTV at Elm Park Gardens and the Tregunter Estate, security gate works at Corbett House and Knights House and garden improvement works such as resident furniture at Hudson House or new planting and planters at 375 Portobello Road. Bids currently being processed from other estates include garden works, bike storage and hard landscape redesigns.
- On Lancaster West, we've transformed over 150m² of unused public realm into community gardens used by residents and volunteers, including the Lancaster West Tea Garden, and Lavender Garden. The first green roof has also been installed on the estate, absorbing 5kg of CO₂ per year.
- On Lancaster West, a state-of-the-art sports pen has been delivered providing a safe bright area for ball games and a range of age-appropriate children's play equipment. There are also 56 secure bicycle spaces on the site.

Antisocial behaviour – what we have done

We want everyone who lives in our borough to enjoy living in their home, but we know this isn't always the case. We know that sometimes residents spoil the quality of life for those living nearby, and for that reason:

- We have published a new antisocial behaviour policy on our website that sets out the strong action we will take against those who are guilty. We've trained our staff so that they are clear on what is acceptable and are prepared to take action when necessary.
- We have recruited a new ASB manager whose responsibility will be to implement our policy and take action, where necessary. We are also recruiting for an ASB officer. This will help ensure that we respond to ASB effectively.
- We are offering mediation services to our tenants which helps two parties resolve their differences. We are going to place much more emphasis on regular communication with residents and keeping you informed on the progress of your case.
- The neighbourhood teams have obtained seven civil injunctions from April 2019 to date, whereas before this time, injunctions were not being used. These are more often for higher level cases where there are safety concerns. They will include requirements on the person in question to cease from any negative behaviour.
- The number of legal enforcement actions taken to date (April 2019 to date) is 29 (25 of those being legal remedies), compared to three acceptable behaviour agreements (non-legal remedy) in the year of 2018/19.

How we are doing and where we need to improve

- We have conducted a detailed review of the lettings process, and subsequent changes to team structures and workflows resulted in a reduction in the number of empty homes. We continue to work on improving outcomes in this area. During the year we let 395 homes – an 80 per cent increase in lettings when compared to the previous year. As a result, the number of vacant and available homes has continued to decrease throughout the year. We introduced virtual viewings, whereby staff made short films which were sent to residents letting a property, to reduce the risk of exposure to Covid-19.
- As the number of empty homes reduced, the average time to re-let an empty home also reduced when compared to last year's figure; however, the time taken to turnaround vacant homes still remains higher than the sector average. Following changes to structures and workflows referenced above, significant improvements to this measure were achieved as the year progressed, with the average re-let for the final three months of the year reducing to 53.9 days.
- No evictions took place during the lockdown, in line with government directives.
- The rollout of Universal Credit continues to impact on rent collection and arrears. The number of households in receipt of Universal Credit has more than doubled during the year, ending March with a total of 816 claimants. The impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on household incomes also affected rent collection in late March and has continued to be reflected in increasing debt levels going into 2020-21. Despite both these factors, current tenant rent arrears ended the year at £1.619 million, compared to £1.654 million in March 2019. This reflects the ongoing work to improve our processes and the work being undertaken to ensure that households are maximizing benefit entitlements.
- We have set up a new Financial Inclusion Team, who have been especially recruited to help residents in difficulty. We have referred over 40 residents so far this year to the Kensington and Chelsea Citizen Advice Bureau, for specialist advice on managing debt and maximising benefits
- To help our residents who may be struggling to keep up with rent payments during the pandemic, we set aside a support fund. We have provided grants to 59 residents. We offer residents affected by the Coronavirus pandemic further financial support, where needed, through the Council's Local Support Payments. We have boosted this by £400,000 funded by the rent increase, on top of funding from central government.
- Delivered over £750k of income, employment and grants to North Kensington as part of our
- commitment to create opportunities to the whole community.

Resident Satisfaction Survey 2019

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Tenants - How satisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?	65.8%	68.0%	-
Tenants - How satisfied are you that your service charge provides value for money?	57.5%	58.0%	-

Performance measure	2018-19	2019-20	Target 2019-20
Current tenant rent arrears, as a percentage of the annual rent debit	3.42%	3.33%	<=3.37%
Number of evictions for rent arrears	6	15	-
Average calendar days to re-let a vacant home (standard works)	167.8	118.4	-
Number of vacant and available to let homes (excluding Lancaster West regeneration)	134	72	-

Allocations and mutual exchange – what we have done

- We consulted on our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy and we are now implementing it.
- We continue to be members of the mutual exchange website, ‘Homeswapper’, where our tenants can register free of charge. We have reviewed our mutual exchange process and we are in the process of reviewing our policy too.

Tenure – what we have done

- Following feedback from tenants, the Council’s Leadership Team took the decision to end the use of Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies and extend the use of Lifetime Tenancies to all Council tenants in February. This was in order to provide greater benefit and enable the resident to build a long-term future in the community. Some 106 tenants received a secure tenancy following their introductory period passing and 412 tenants who were on a two, or five year fixed term tenancy converted to a secure tenancy.
- We reviewed the Tenancy policy with residents in line with the introduction of lifetime tenancies.
- We are also reviewing the tenancy conditions, engaging residents along the way during a Task and Finish group and will be going to leadership in December.
- We have co-designed a Local Lettings Plan to provide security for residents recovering from the Grenfell Tower Tragedy. So far, 35 households have obtained lifetime secure tenancies through this route in fully refurbished homes, with another 35 expected in the lifetime of the plan.

