

Lewisham Residents Review Panel

An Independent Resident-led Report into the Role of the Housing Officer, and communication to residents.

Date of Report:

October 2025

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1. Introduction

The Lewisham Residents Review Panel, RRP, is an autonomous Panel of Lewisham Council tenants and leaseholders (referred to as “residents”) set up and funded by the Lewisham Tenants’ Fund in conjunction with the London Borough of Lewisham. The role of the RRP is to investigate and review housing services and report findings to the Council through the Service & Performance Committee. The report proposes improvements that will benefit the service and all residents collaboratively as a “critical friend”.

The RRP is central to Lewisham Borough's resident engagement and is committed to co-regulation. It was formed in 2012 under Lewisham Homes and is currently composed of six residents.

The area of the review, The Role of the *Housing Officer* was selected by the Panel based on data from the Council's roadshows, suggestions from the S&P Committee and from Housing Services Senior Management. The Panel chose to concentrate on communication, as anecdotally, very few residents understood the role, nor knew who their Housing Officer was. It was hoped this work could assist managers in recruiting new officers, raise resident satisfaction and result in fewer complaints by improving communication.

This RSP Investigation Panel comprised Naomi Groves (Chair), Dianne Cox, Keith Walton, Gosia Janik, Graham Mandelli and Theresa Reid. The review was supported by Alys Exley-Smith, Community Relations Manager and Clare Hopkins, Head of Housing & Communities, along with mentoring support from Jane Eyles. The RRP would like to thank all the staff from Lewisham Council, as well as the Lewisham Tenants Fund, for funding this project. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the residents who generously gave up their time to support this review.

2. Executive Summary

The RRP have noted several strengths in the service that Housing Officers provide, along with some recommendations for improvement in communication.

The key strengths are:

1. A positive and empathetic team of Housing Officers, which impressed panel members with their willingness to go the extra mile for residents.
2. A team that showed excellent team mutual support whilst working within resource constraints.
3. The Homecheck pilot enables several proactive housing management outcomes and aids the motivation of staff.
4. The Head of Housing & Communities is well respected amongst all of the staff
5. New Housing Officers have an excellent induction process

Not every organisation is perfect, and a summary of areas that can be improved includes:

1. Communication with all residents that explains who the housing officer is and what they do. This lack of ongoing communication leads to resident expectations that cannot be fulfilled within existing resources.
2. Silo working within the Council really hampers the role and the ability to deliver a better service – several measures could help this.
3. The Homecheck pilot, whilst worthwhile, will fail to accomplish data collection in the desired period. It will need to be supplemented by additional methods, or the Housing officer's time will need to be freed up.
4. Whilst Lewisham is clearly suffering from resource issues, there could generally be a more supportive enthusiastic and visionary outlook within housing management.
5. Residents are frustrated in their efforts to contact their Housing officer and we feel that this needs monitoring more.

3. Methodology

The RRP agreed the following objectives of the review:

- i. How is the name and role of Housing Officer communicated?
- ii. How do residents know what to expect from their Housing Officer and how does this affect resident satisfaction and team motivation?
- iii. How easy is it for residents to communicate with their Housing Officer?
- iv. How can the Panel assist with improving resident satisfaction with the Housing Officer?
- v. How can the Panel assist with recruitment?
- vi. How does the Homecheck pilot help achieve outcomes for residents?
- vii. Are the Housing Officers sufficiently resourced and supported?

The Panel carried out the following tasks:

- a. **Desk Top Review:** The Panel examined the following documents:
 - Lewisham Council's website
 - The Residents Portal
 - Electronic newsletters over the past year
 - A sample of web pages from the housing sector
 - A sample of redacted complaints and responses

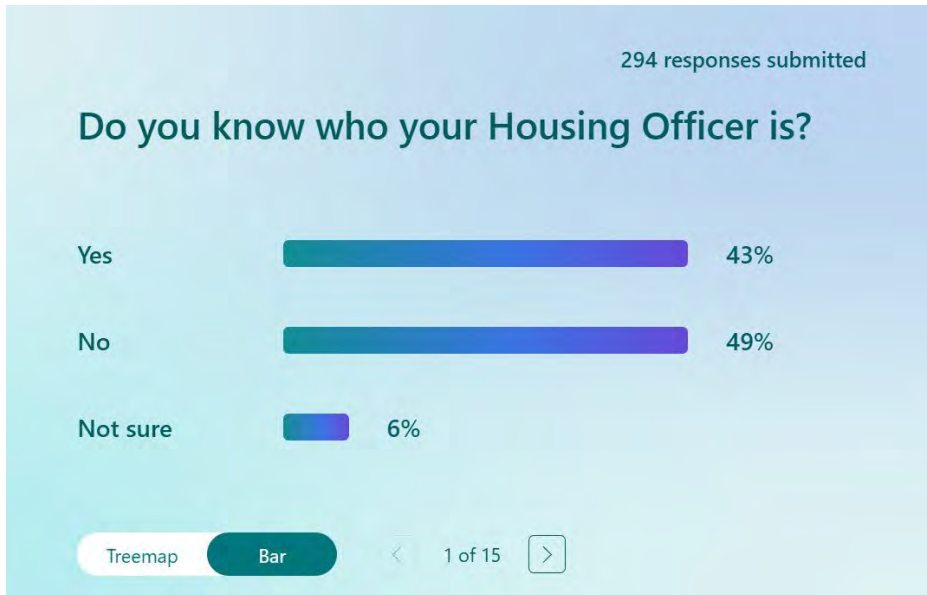
- Inside Housing magazine's national survey of Housing Officers
- 2025 Housing Officer Job Description
- Pilot proposal for Homecheck
- Pilot guidance for Homecheck
- Homecheck review presentation
- Annual Report to Residents 2024
- RSH Regulatory Standards

- b. **Presentations:** Clare Hopkins, Head of Housing & Communities
- c. **RRP designed survey:** We received nearly 300 responses from a survey link emailed out. The survey can be viewed here [Resident Housing Officer Survey – Fill in form](#)
- d. **Structured Interviews:** Assistant Director of Housing & Communities, the Head of Housing & Communities, 2 x Housing Team Leaders, Housing Manager and the Communications Lead for housing
- e. **Focus Groups:** involving 8 Housing Officers

4. Detailed Findings

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| i. Communication of the name of the Housing Officer |
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The Panel was surprised by the sheer number of tasks performed by Housing Officers, and there was little prior knowledge among the Panel members themselves. One member had previously worked for a housing association, and two other members had attended Tenants & Resident Association meetings where they had seen their Housing Officer.



Alongside these responses were comments such as

“Because I needed to contact her, then I was given her contact.” **Resident**

“After many phone calls to find out who” **Resident**

“Letter was sent around about anti-social behaviour and it advised who the housing officer was to discuss issues” **Resident**

“I have had to contact her”, **Resident** *“He came and introduced himself to me”*

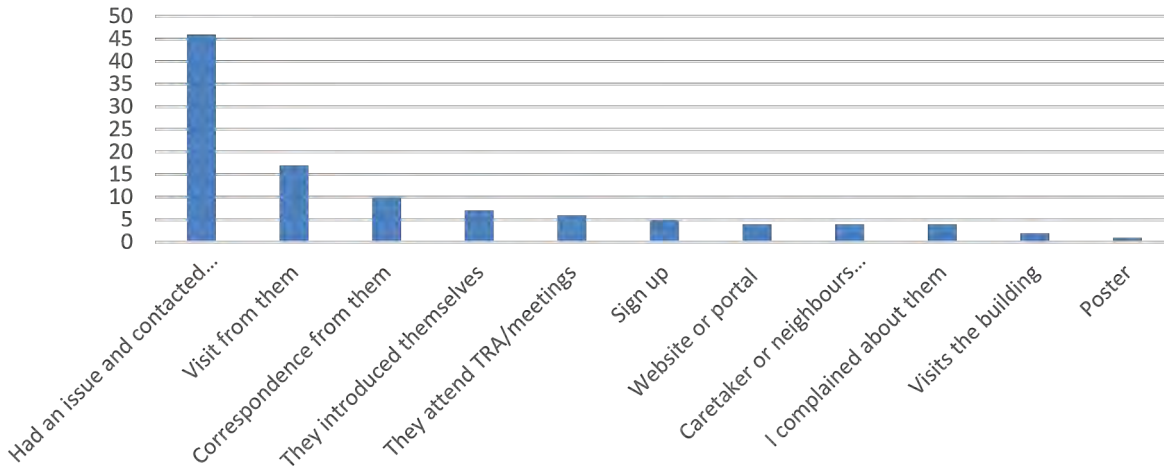
Housing Officers themselves also answered “they don’t” and “I tell them”

Of those who knew their Housing Officer, most residents found out because they had attempted to contact them when they had an issue. As long as residents are proactive, they can find out, but many expressed that it was quite difficult. Seventeen residents had received a visit.

“People don’t need to know who I am until they need me”, **Housing Officer**

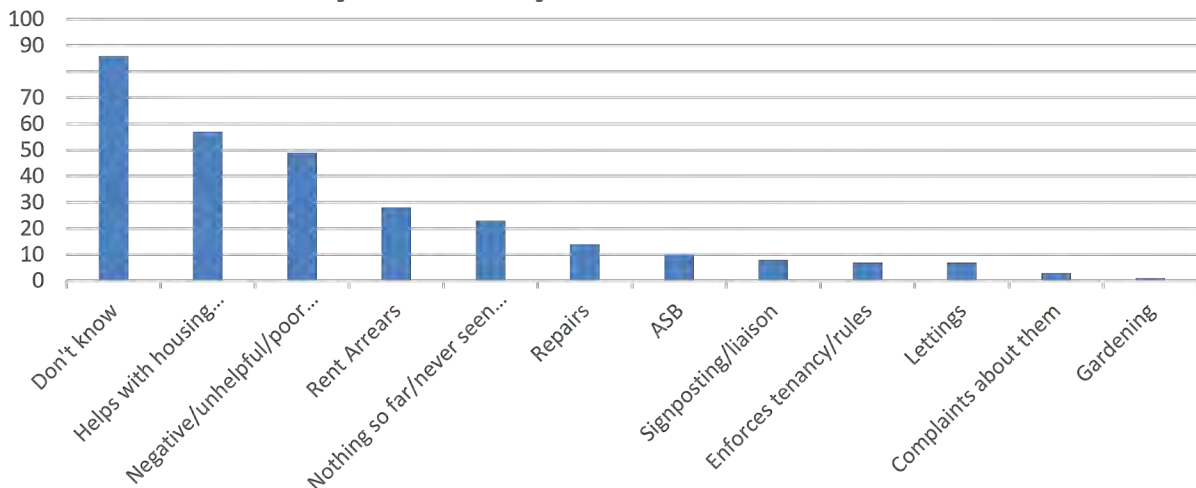
“Tenants silo themselves by thinking they need only one person to do something, but there are 17 of us, any of us can do it” *“We can all do the work”,* **Housing Officer**

How do you know who your HO is?



ii. Communication of the role of the Housing Officer

What do you think your HO does in their role?

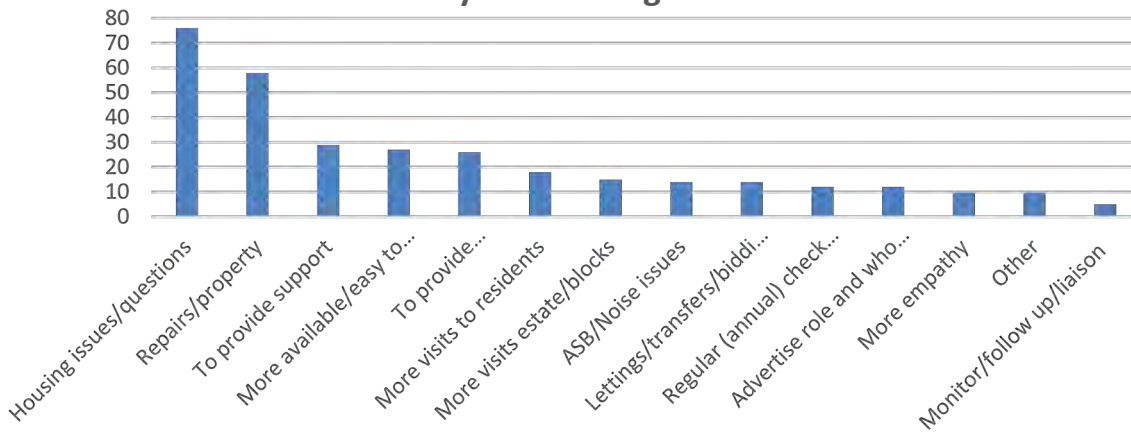


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The most significant response from residents was 'don't know'. Many residents incorrectly believed they dealt with rent arrears, lettings and repairs. There were also several negative comments along the lines of *“not very much”* and *“doesn't get my repairs done”*. The Panel felt that this lack of knowledge created several false expectations, which led to negative satisfaction.

“We should let the residents know what we do and what we can't do”, Housing Officer.

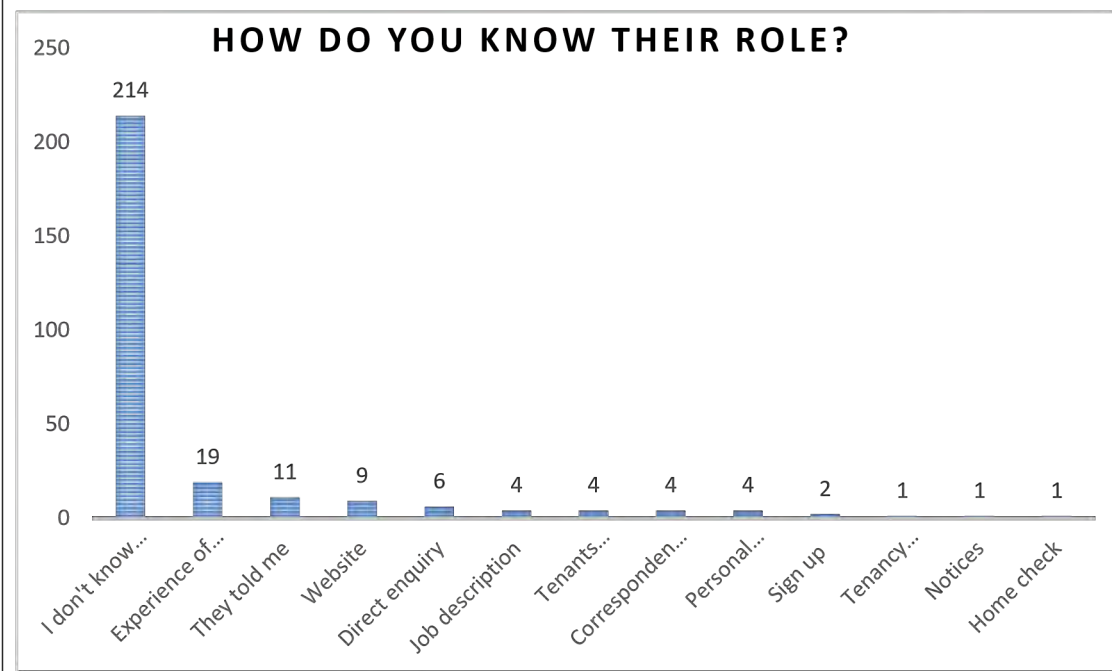
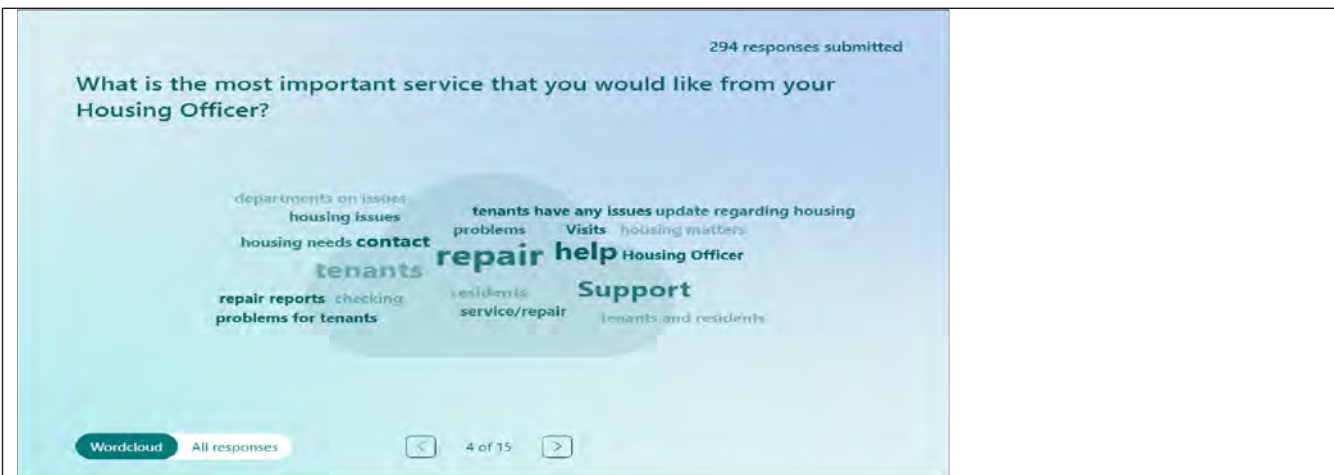
What is the most important service that you would like from your Housing Officer?



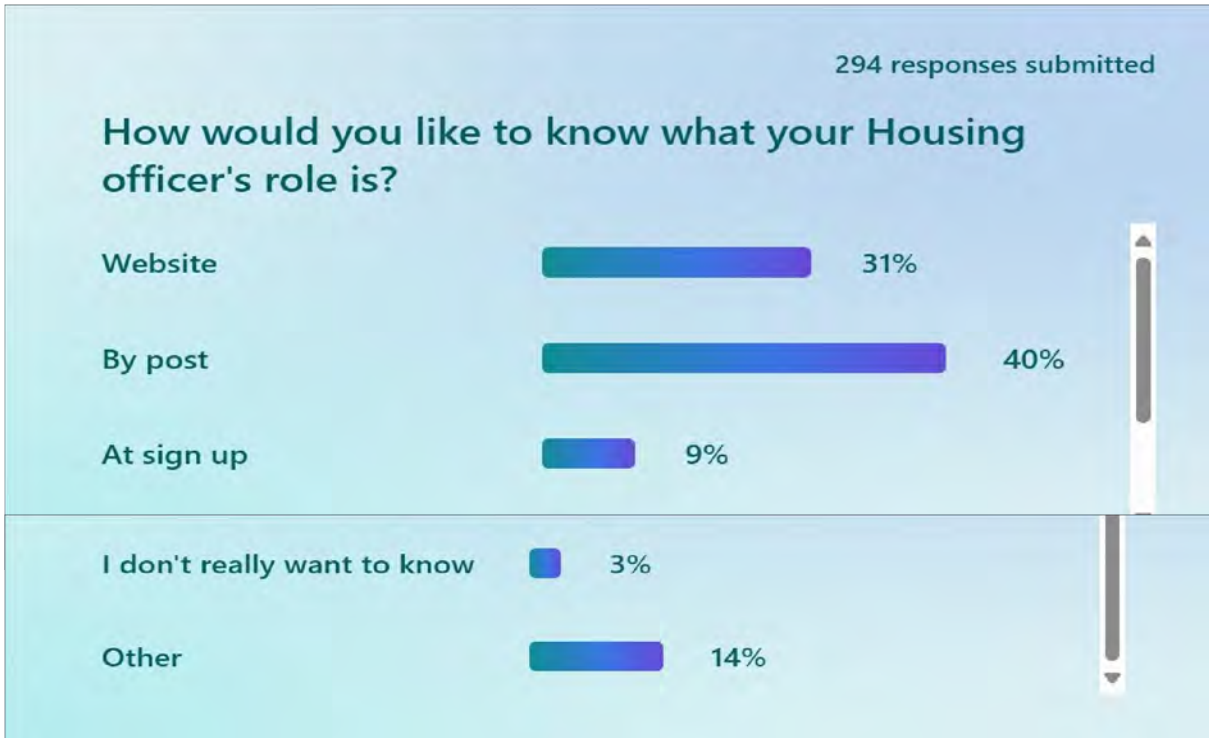
The Panel asked this question to see how residents might prioritise, and respondents showed a better grasp of what they wanted than knowledge of what they actually did. The second-highest response was about repairs. There needs to be strong communication about the fact that Housing Officers do not deal with repairs currently, as Housing Officers are receiving a lot of negativity about a service they do not offer. Residents also wanted more proactive contact, and the Home Check provides an opportunity for this. However, there are clearly not enough resources to accommodate requests from survey respondents for monthly, quarterly, or annual check-ins. This discussion needs to be had by the Council with residents, providing clear explanations.

Housing staff themselves listed priorities set by managers, such as legislative deadlines, safeguarding and those by process. However, many gave examples of weekly visits to help residents bid for homes or to check whether they had fallen through. They felt there was not enough time to do the job correctly. These examples make the Panel question the consistency of the service. Who decides which residents get this additional service? How does this impact the time required to do the service?

to



Resident respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they were unaware of the role, and it is imperative to inform them by their preferred method below. Note that the demand for posts may reflect the age profile of respondents; however, this highlights the need to collect data on residents' communication preferences as soon as possible.



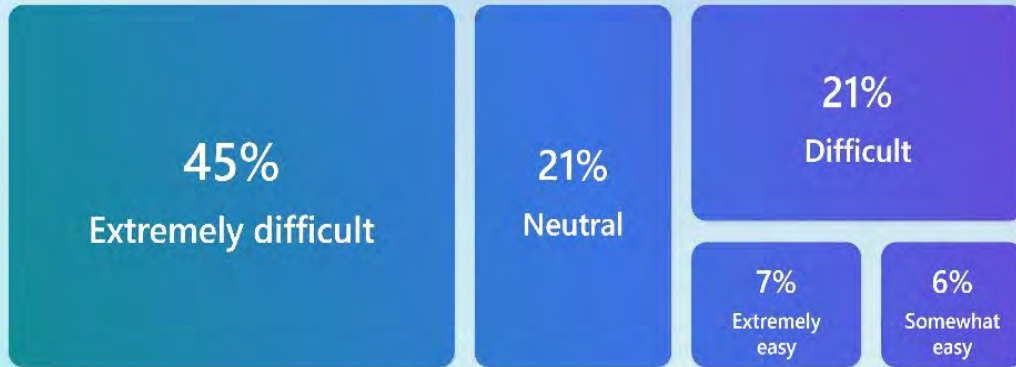
One of the problems was that council communications were centred on tasks, rather than the role of the Housing Officer themselves. So, there is an index on Mutual Exchange, Anti-social behaviour, tenancy changes, etc, rather than any information on Housing Officers. The Panel are delighted to see a web page on the role of the Housing Officer added at the end of October – a clear, quick win for the review.

iii. How easy is it for residents to access the service offered by Housing Officers?

As the majority told us that they did not know what the role entailed, the Panel expected this to be a difficult task. There has also been a recent history of telephone answering difficulties in the Council. The results show that 76% of resident respondents told us that it was 'very difficult' or 'difficult'. This may be historical, but the Panel feels there needs to be some monitoring in this area.

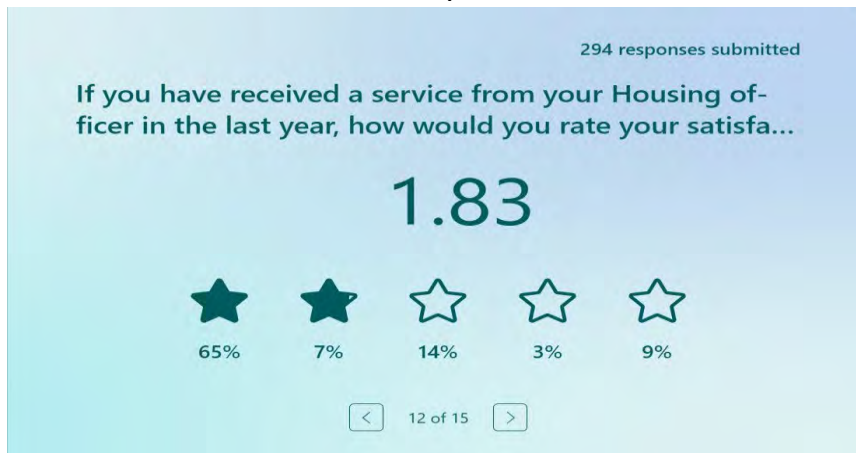
294 responses submitted

How easy is it to communicate with your Housing



iv. How can the Panel help raise resident satisfaction with the Housing Officer?

Below are the results of the question that was asked in the survey:



The Panel appreciate that tenancy enforcement is part of the role and this may lead to lower satisfaction. It also appreciates that many respondents blame Housing Officers for a recently struggling repair service but this is a snapshot of low satisfaction which can only be helped by better communications and admission of resource constraints with residents.

There were several responses regarding poor coverage of sickness, a lazy work culture, and one officer was named by three residents as being very unresponsive.

“We are the face of the council – they expect you to do everything”, Housing Officer

Interestingly, satisfaction with Housing Officers increased among panel members once they met them and understood their role.

The Panel found the Housing Officers who gave evidence to be very professional, experienced and dedicated. They were very honest. They were extremely pleased to have been allowed access to the Panel. They showed real empathy in their responses, *“The team is really good; they want to help make lives better. Big or small. Very empathetic or people would have left by now.” Housing Officer*

v. How can the Panel assist with recruitment?

The Panel was only allowed access to one recently recruited Housing Officer, and that officer showed much empathy and demonstrated a good induction plan. However, whilst reviewing the Job Description, the panel felt that it needed some updating and some vision and enthusiasm put into it. The Housing Assistant and Housing Officer JDs do not align in the use of language, grammar, and unexplained acronyms such as ASB. One is written in varying person/tenses.

The Panel also found that all vacancies necessitate approval from the Council's CEO to be filled, resulting in lengthy reports, business cases, and time for decision-making. The Panel queries whether this is a good use of management resources?

vi. How does the Homecheck pilot help achieve outcomes for residents?

The Panel entered into this review with considerable doubts about the Homecheck pilot, in particular the practice of cold calling. However, members learned that there were good reasons for not publicising the project in advance because of the danger of scam visits to residents. Although there was quite good Housing Officer engagement in shaping home checks (although not the concept which was described "*as dropped on us from above*"), the lack of resident engagement is a problem (as is the case in all of the Panel's reviews to date. Residents would have shaped this and enabled it to work more practically.

Housing Officers were particularly enthusiastic about some of the outcomes of the pilot, "*We really like it and see the advantages but we are so behind so it may be a bit unrealistic – it generates a lot of work*" **Housing Officer**

"Home check is good. I love meeting my residents," **Housing Officer**

“I love going out there to meet my residents. I get to meet so many people that I would never get to meet if I didn’t go out there to do Homecheck” **Housing Officer**

However, the project is not set to achieve its target of collecting resident data to identify residents’ needs over the next five years, and the Panel has calculated that this will take over 10 years at the current progress rate. This is essential to tailor services to everyone and also to comply with the Regulator of Social Housing’s expectations.

Officers have been frustrated by a lack of software to collate data (the Panel understands that this has now been ordered now that the pilot is working) and by a lack of mobile devices such as tablets to collect data, meaning that there are inefficiencies in the administrative duties at a time where the Housing Assistant posts have not been filled.

vii. Are the Housing Officers sufficiently resourced and supported?

The Panel did not examine budgets or benchmarks, as the review chiefly focused on communication. A majority of those who supplied evidence did not think Housing Officers in Lewisham were sufficiently resourced.

“I’ve been shuffling around for weeks and weeks, saying’ that will wait’. My priorities change on a weekly basis and then my inbox takes over and it gets to a point where it all won’t wait any longer” **Housing Officer**

There were numerous examples of a lack of time for core duties, training and development and to fill the void left by cuts in other support services. Certainly in a perfect world, the Panel would prefer the Council to look at further resources to reduce patch sizes in line with the 2023 [Better Social Housing Review | Chartered Institute of Housing](#)

The Panel felt that there was scope for more smarter working. For example, when a suggestion was made to the focus group that access for Home checks could be facilitated through annual gas servicing, participants were incredulous about how that could ever be made to work due to a lack of joined-up working and systems.

The Panel believes in making every contact count and feels that more work could be spent across the teams identifying opportunities for this, particularly for a few key priorities. Likewise, using tablets with a SIM would enable smarter working and less administration time. Management has been supportive in shifting tasks, such as duty phone calls, to the corporate call centre.

There may be scope to expedite home checks by removing duties associated with drug dealing, which involves some duplication with ASB Officers. Videos of homes about to be let could be created by the Voids Team for applicants with only one offer, saving time on viewings and reducing the need for multiple viewings.

There is a slight disconnect between senior management and the Panel, and the Panel felt that more empathy could be shown in encouraging Housing Officers.

“Clare gets it but above that, they don’t understand what happens on the ground – we understand it may be good for residents but it’s not practical” **Housing Officers.**

The Panel feels that more thought needs to go both into bridging this gap and between service teams. The role of the Housing Officer is a challenging one, and motivation to be the best can be hard to find while the Council is being inspected and reported on by key government agencies for past failures. Housing Officers and the Panel had experienced inter and intra service teams awaydays to set priorities and listen to customer-facing staff views, which built mutual respect.

7. Learning and review for future projects

The review went smoothly, and the logistics were far superior to previous reviews. Communication between the Panel and the Directorate was smooth with no cancelled appointments, and the Panel is extremely grateful for this.

Panel members had to learn to facilitate focus groups and received training for this purpose, which expanded their knowledge and experience.

Senior managers expressed several reservations about scrutinising this area due to low morale and high workloads in the teams. However, Housing Officers themselves fed back that they enjoyed providing us with evidence and felt “listened to,” and were able to reappraise their view of resident engagement as being constructive. The interaction between Panel members and Housing Officers was mutually beneficial to both sides.

The Panel felt slightly frustrated in not being able to select which officers to meet randomly and there remains a little disquiet about officers being “cherry picked”.

However, Panel members were also able to reappraise their view of Housing

Officers and their dedication. Scrutiny involves resident panel members being able to set aside any pre-existing views, and the Panel certainly had to exercise this discipline in this review.

The Panel remains of the view that there is an urgent need to recruit some new members to share the workload and refresh.

Table of recommendations

The recommendations overleaf are colour-coded into the following:

High Importance
Medium importance
Low importance

Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
1. How is the name and role of Housing Officer communicated?					
Insufficient information to residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-channel ongoing communication campaign to advise residents who they are. Posters/portal/web page/social media/letters/newsletters/text/video 	Agreed - We are currently looking at the redesign of the new portal in collaboration with residents. We will include information regarding the Housing Officers and their roles as part of this. The project will launch in April 2026.	Tracy Pasifull/ Anna Wojtasewksa	December 2026	
		As an interim solution we will explore the option of adding the following link Lewisham Council - Housing officer search to the portal	Tracy Pasifull/ Anna Wojtasewksa	May 2026	
		Agreed - We can use the Bulk Text option on HMS to send out texts when there is a change to the	Tracy Pasifull	Ongoing	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All HO's should introduce with a poster/text themselves and their role 	Housing Officer		
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Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
		when they join or get a new patch			

2. How do residents know what to expect from their Housing Officer, and how does this affect resident satisfaction and team motivation?

<p>Insufficient information to residents</p>	<p>See above, plus regular features and articles such as this A day in the life of a Housing Officer - Cheshire West and Chester</p> <p>Patch annual newsletters Greater information about what they do not do and how to get repairs done? brand #LewishamHousingOfficers</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities of your Housing Officer London Borough of Barking and Dagenham</p>	<p>Agreed - We will review the information on our website.</p> <p>Part agreed - We cannot commit to an annual patch newsletter but we can use existing resident Newsletters and web content to reinforce the Housing Officer's responsibilities. The redesigned portal should also reflect this through clearer navigation and content.</p> <p>A day in the life of article will be published with further articles later in the year to reinforce changes to the web and portal</p>	<p>Tracy Pasifull/Kimon Daltas</p>	<p>27 March 2026</p> <p>March – December 2026</p>
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Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
<p>3. How easy is it for residents to communicate with their Housing Officer?</p>					

Evidence shows that there is high dissatisfaction with this	Publicise the HO Inbox within the campaign above. Monitor inbox responses.	<p>Agreed - We are already publicising the Housing Management inbox as the preferred method of contact into the team in all correspondence and information which is sent to residents.</p> <p>This inbox is monitored by the Housing Assistants. Responses are monitored as part of monthly 121s</p>	Donna Boyle Ongoing	Completed
4. How can the Panel improve resident satisfaction with the Housing Officer?				
Resident satisfaction is low because residents do not know what they do and expect Housing Officers to resolve repairs issues	<p>Removing some of the ASB duties such as drug dealing to reduce dual roles</p> <p>Rename HOs as Tenancy Officers</p>	<p>Agreed - Drug dealing is already dealt with by ASB.</p> <p>Agreed - We can explore whether changing the name of the Housing Officers would be beneficial. However, any changes, would impact policies, procedures and HMS so there would be a significant cost to do so.</p>	Tracy Pasifull	<p>Completed</p> <p>January 2027</p>

Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
		Communication as above	<p>The recent restructure within Quality and Investment introduced Resident Liaison Officers and Customer Experience Officers, which will improve support for residents and reduce the reliance on Housing Officers to deal with repair issues.</p> <p>A review will be undertaken following the implementation of the changes within Quality and Investment and communication campaign to see if the changes already made have had the required impact.</p> <p>Agreed - As above</p> <p>Agreed - All Housing Officer's diaries should be accessible to view. This has been checked and confirmed</p>	Tracy Pasifull	Completed

Ensure HO calendars are accessible to support sickness

5. How can the Panel assist with recruitment?

Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
<p>The Job Description is dated and not attractive</p> <p>Induction is thorough</p>	<p>Rewrite JD with HO's and include attractive elements of the job using Artificial Intelligence (AI)</p> <p>Consider smarter solutions to corporate recruitment permissions</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Not agreed - The Permission to Recruit process is a corporate one, which we have no authority to change.</p>	<p>Tracy Pasifull</p>	<p>June 2026</p>	
<p>6. How does the Homecheck pilot help achieve outcomes for residents?</p>					

We can evidence systematic positive outcomes, such as data, identifying residents with additional needs, increased signposting for support, and motivation and positive feelings from staff in meeting the needs of all residents.	Continue to install software to process the data from the pilot.	Agreed - The project to utilise HMS to record and report on Homechecks is underway.	Tracy Pasifull/ Anna Wojtaszewska	June 2026
	Engage residents to improve the process	Agreed - Survey has been sent to those residents who have had a Homecheck asking for feedback. The results of this will determine whether any further workshops are required.	Tracy Pasifull	May 2026
	Consider hiring company/staff to telephone residents	Not agreed - We do not have the resources to hire a company of additional staff to telephone residents.		
	Video call some Homechecks	Not agreed - The purpose of the Homecheck is to inspect the		

Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
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	Report publicity about the pilot without mentioning cold calling	<p>property to ensure it is being maintained to an acceptable standard and whether the tenant has any additional support needs so we do not believe video calls would be an effective way of capturing this information.</p> <p>Agreed - We can publicise the outcome of these checks and promote the benefit.</p>	Tracy Pasifull/Kimon Daltas	June 2026
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7. Is the HO service sufficiently resourced and supported?

<p>Patch sizes are large compared to others, and the CIOH/NHF report confirms this. Slight disconnect between senior managers and customer-facing staff</p>	<p>When resources become available, reduce patch sizes and set out a strategy to do so in advance.</p> <p>Consider larger patch groups, such as Deptford, to enable more comprehensive coverage.</p>	<p>Agreed - We will consider this if additional resources become available.</p> <p>Not agreed - Patches are already allocated on a geographical basis. We regularly review HO caseloads and if we notice an imbalance we will reallocate work accordingly.</p>		
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Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
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	<p>Work smarter through: Chatbot on the HO web page with common questions.</p> <p>Video viewings & for six-week visits</p> <p>Regular awaydays for managers/ Housing Officers to discuss role and consistency of service to those with additional needs.</p>	<p>We will investigate the use of Chatbot</p> <p>Not agreed - During the viewing. The Housing Officer provides important information and answers questions for example around fire safety. This wouldn't work in the same way if viewings were virtual. Some viewings are also multiple viewings.</p> <p>Welcome visits are already carried out over the telephone where this is better for the resident due to work commitments.</p> <p>Not agreed – We do not think away days would be the most cost effective was to ensure consistency of service. We utilise “Bitesize” briefing sessions to talk about the role and ensure consistency across the department.</p> <p>Sessions have included the following.</p>	Tracy Pasifull	March 2026
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Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Hoarding • Cuckooing and County lines • Professional Curiosity • Suicide Awareness 		
	Regular awayday for all service teams on how to utilise “every visit counts” for key housing priorities	We have introduced monthly drop-in sessions to discuss complex cases involving vulnerable residents.		
	Promote external networking and training & development opportunities for Housing Officers	Not agreed - We do not think away days for all service teams would be feasible; however, we can do a webinar(s) around this.		
	More internal recognition and incentives e.g. awards for HOs	Agreed - Development opportunities are discussed and encouraged as part of the appraisal process.	Tracy Pasifull	July 2026
		Partly agreed - We already have corporate awards. We do not have a team budget for rewards, but we have a “celebration of success” section as part of every department		Complete

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Number	Findings	Recommendation	Management Response	Officer Responsible	Timescale
			meeting. The Head of Service also shares good news stories in her monthly updates to the team.		

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Appendix 1 Focus Group Questions

Tell us about your job? What do you do?

How do residents know what to expect from your role?

How do residents know who their Housing Officer is?

How do you prioritise tasks?

How do you know this matches resident's needs & priorities?

Tell us about the Homecheck pilot?

How were you/residents informed or consulted about this new pilot?

How do you feel about it? Is it working? [Prompt how often do you visit]?

How did you learn the role of Housing Officer?

What support/training do you get?

How can you ensure management understand any issues with the job? (how do you feed back?)

What are you are you proud of about the service?

What would you improve (prompts structure, funding)?

Where do you see the service in 5 years?

Additional Questions for Managers

Who wrote the Home check pilot proposal and where did it go to for approval?

Apart from Homecheck, are there any other initiatives to collect residents' data?

If money was no object/magic wand – what would you like? Options

What incentives are there to motivate HO's to perform well?

How are residents involved in policies and priorities?

How are HO's measured?

