

Neighbours in the Know

News for friends of Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours.
Befriending older people in Tower Hamlets since 1947.

This is the large print edition. All the same news, in bigger type.

What the people we befriend told us

This spring, **49 older people across Tower Hamlets** shared their experience of THFN's befriending service in our biggest survey yet. The message was loud and clear: befriending works.

100% are satisfied with our service — 49 out of 49, and 86% are very satisfied.

47 out of 48 say THFN has improved their quality of life.

45 out of 46 feel less lonely and isolated since joining us.

One befriender, aged between 75 and 84, told us simply:
"THFN saves lives."

And what do people value most? Not errands or appointments — the relationship itself. **Someone to talk to. Companionship and friendship.** That was named by more befrienders than anything else we do.

Families feel it too. One daughter, who cares for her mum, told us the weekly visit is **"a lifeline for Mum and for me."** Thank you to everyone who took part.

Have your say: new 'One Stop Shop' at the Harford Centre

Tower Hamlets Council is opening a One Stop Shop at the Harford Centre from September 2026, with free advice on council benefits and tax, housing and public health.

The council is setting up a **Resident Engagement Panel** so local people can shape the health offer. If you care about better health in your community, have some experience of volunteering, working or taking part in community health activities, and speak good English, they would love to hear from you. Men, younger people, disabled and LGBTQ+ residents are especially encouraged to join.

- The panel meets about once every six weeks, for one year, at the Harford Centre, during the day.
- The first meeting is **10am to midday on Thursday 6 August**.
- Panel members receive a **£20 shopping voucher** for each meeting.

To express interest, contact Ed Davie by email:
ed.davie@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Scam Watch: phone scams doing the rounds

"Sky" discount calls

A cold caller offers a 30% discount on your subscription, then asks about your service and what you pay each month — all to keep you talking until you give away personal details.

"HMRC" legal threats

A recorded call claims legal action is under way and tells you to 'press 1 to speak to an adviser'. HMRC does not call people this way.

"Your bank" and a declined payment

The caller claims an unauthorised payment was declined and invites you to 'press 1' if it wasn't you. Hang up and ring your bank on a number you trust.

"Job offer" voicemails

A voicemail claims to be from a job website about an opportunity. Genuine recruiters don't leave messages like this.

The golden rule

Never read out a one-time passcode to anyone on the phone, however convincing they sound. Your bank will never ask for it. One local man lost £225 this way — the scammers were logging in to his account while he was on the call.

Five ways to beat scam callers

1. Don't answer calls from numbers you don't recognise — let them go to voicemail.
2. Never give personal or bank details to a cold caller. Hang up and check with the organisation yourself, using contact details you trust.
3. After a suspicious call on a landline, wait **10 to 15 minutes** before using the phone again — scammers can keep the line open.
4. Register free with the **Telephone Preference Service** to stop genuine marketing calls — so cold callers stand out.
5. If 'your bank' rings, hang up and dial **159** to reach your bank's genuine customer service line.

Report a scam

Forward scam calls free by texting the word 'call' to **7726**. Report scams at **reportfraud.police.uk** or by calling **101**. If money has been taken, ring your bank straight away.

Crackdown on pension scams

New government plans will better protect pension savers from fraudsters who trick people into moving their pension pots into bogus schemes, often leaving victims with no way to recover a lifetime of savings. Under the proposals, suspicious transfers will trigger a warning flag so they can be stopped in time.

Council tenants: help with April's rent increase

Council rents rose by 4.8% in April 2026 — around £6.70 a week on average. A new council **Hardship Fund** can credit six months' worth of the increase (around £174 for an average tenant) straight to your rent account.

It is for secure council tenants who pay their own rent and do not receive Housing Benefit, Universal Credit or Pension Credit, with a household income of £60,000 or less and savings under £6,000. Funding is limited and first come, first served.

To apply: call the Housing Service Centre on **020 7364 5015** or visit the Residents Hub. If you are not eligible, ask about Discretionary Housing Payments and benefits advice.

Take a break: the Scam Watch word search

All ten words come from this newsletter. They run across, down or diagonally — never backwards. Pop the kettle on first.

C	P	D	B	R	E	P	O	R	T
V	B	S	C	A	M	M	E	R	A
O	G	I	D	G	N	D	P	U	P
I	E	I	I	B	A	K	A	S	E
C	N	D	S	M	C	L	S	C	N
E	U	N	C	P	T	S	S	F	S
M	I	G	O	B	R	T	C	R	I
A	N	B	U	D	U	R	O	A	O
I	E	I	N	M	S	P	D	U	N
L	U	G	T	I	T	B	E	D	G

BANK

DISCOUNT

FRAUD

GENUINE

PASSCODE

PENSION

REPORT

SCAMMER

TRUST

VOICEMAIL

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