

Heads-Up

Your quarterly Look Ahead customer newsletter.

Late Summer 26

Listening, learning and improving special edition



A message from John, this edition's Guest Editor.



It's an absolute honour to be back for a second spell as guest editor, and for such an important issue.

This issue is our '**listening, learning and improving**' special where we share the results of this year's tenant survey. We'll be asking what Look Ahead has done well and probably more importantly, how can Look Ahead improve?

One area that I think Look Ahead is a service leader in is

it's co-production. Which sounds very grand, but at its very basic level, it's us, the customers getting hands on with Look Ahead and trying to help improve its services. Not just for ourselves, but also for those who come after us.

Inside, you will see many different ways to get involved, but there are more not mentioned, for example, coffee mornings and also becoming a quality checker – going to different services and speaking to customers about life there.

So, maybe I should have asked not how can Look Ahead improve? But what can I do to improve Look Ahead? The answer is to speak to your support worker or contact Look Ahead's Co-production Team to discuss how you can get involved on gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk

John

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Cuppa CORNER



Sarah painted her living room how she wanted

Sarah moved to Look Ahead's Stratford Road Learning Disability Service from hospital in 2022. She enjoys personalising her home and support.

When I first moved in, I didn't like the yellow living room. I told my support workers I wanted a more relaxing colour. They showed me colour charts, and I picked a calming reddish purple. Afterwards, four staff helped me re-paint. I'm looking at which furniture I want to add and thinking about how I want to decorate other rooms too. Having a say over my home like this is important to me, I feel valued.

I like my support workers. They really listen. We plan my meals for the week and go shopping. But we do fun things too, like going dancing, museum visits and watching horror films.

Living here means I get time with my family too. I go for coffee with my mum and catch up with my son who's turning 19 this year. I'm happy and settled, I'm at home.



Amir is a customer at Look Ahead's Livingstone House Homelessness Service, he is working towards volunteering and building a career.

I'm quite new to Livingston House. My support worker checks in with me to see how I am feeling, see what's happening in my life and what support I need. So far, she has helped me register with a GP and apply to college to study English.

My course starts in September. I'm originally from Sudan, and improving my English is important to me because I want to be able to communicate with other people, find a job, and feel more part of the community. In the meantime, with my support worker's help, I've been applying for volunteering opportunities as well, including the Red Cross.

I hope that improving my English will help me continue with my education too. I tried to get into university before, but I wasn't ready back then, so I am working towards that goal step by step. I'm feeling positive about the future.

This story was made with The Big Word telephone interpreting tool. If you want to use The Big Word please speak to your support worker.

thebigword

£20

**HIGH STREET
VOUCHER**

We want to hear your story.

Send your story to: **gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk**
If we publish it, we will give you a £20 voucher.

Look Ahead's Garden Heroes

Look Ahead's Information Governance Manager Sarah has teamed up with customers and volunteers to spruce up garden spaces in services over the summer.



Sarah and Tabard Court Manager Camille.

With funding from Inspiring East Village Community, Sarah and her teams, AKA the “**Garden Heroes**” have been planting, painting furniture, tidying up and making the gardens at **Felstead Street**, **Tabard Court** and **Clarence Road** better places for everyone to enjoy.

Mark, a customer from Tabard Court said: “I was involved in painting and planting at Sarah’s direction. It’s fruitful when you see everything to blossom. It’s fulfilling.”

Sarah said: “I thoroughly enjoyed working with customers and volunteers at each of these projects - everyone made a fantastic contribution, and we now have beautiful outdoor spaces for activities and relaxation.”

At Felstead Street, volunteers from Look Ahead’s contractor **Idverde** also lent a hand, by rebuilding raised flower beds and donating several tonnes of compost.

Since completing the projects, the services have celebrated their successes by hosting lovely garden parties with afternoon teas and delicious home-baked cakes.

Well done and thank you to everyone who took part!



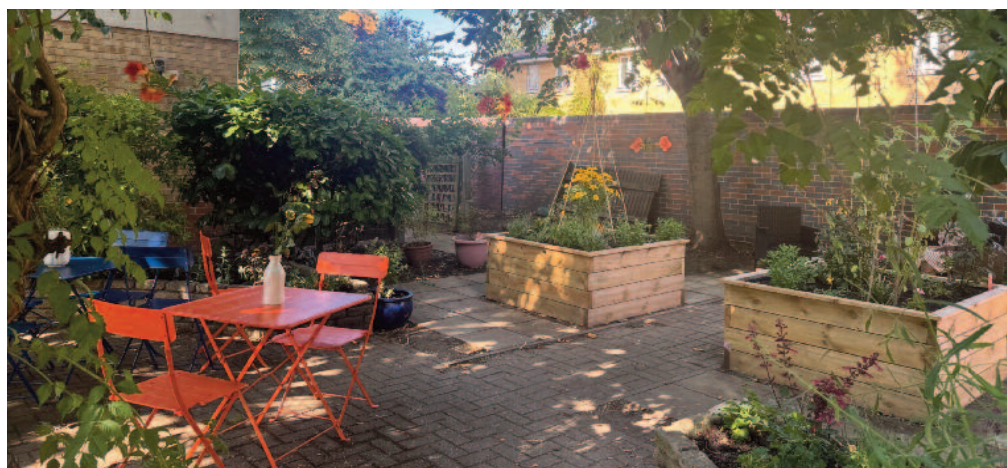
Customers, staff, and visitors celebrated their renovated gardens with tea parties



Monica painting a table at Felstead Street, greeted by Ariel.



An Idverde volunteer at Felstead Street.



The finished project at Felstead Street.



Mark from Tabard Court enjoying the garden.



Olu and Lucia, Look Ahead's Partnership Development Manager painting at Clarence Road.



Nicola from Clarence Road and her finished plant pot.

PICTURE GALLERY



Circles on canvas, art by Look Ahead customers from Waltham Forest.



Parrots, painted by a Look Ahead customer

To send us your art and photos, and learn more about opportunities to get involved, speak to your support worker or email the Co-Production Team at gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk

LISTENING, LEARNING AND IMPROVING

What you told us in 2025/26

803 tenants were invited to take part in our Tenant Perception survey

39.9% of you completed the survey



Your home

How you feel about the safety of your home, our repairs service, and how well we keep it maintained.

- Overall repairs service **79.9%**
- Time taken to complete repairs **73.5%**
- Home is well maintained **78.9%**
- Home is safe **82.5%**



Your neighbourhood

Your feedback on shared spaces and our contribution to your neighbourhoods.

- Communal areas are clean and maintained **78.8%**
- Look Ahead makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood **69.2%**



Your voice

These results show how you feel about the information we share with you and whether we act on feedback.

- We listen to and act on feedback **75.8%**
- Keeping you informed **79.2%**



When things go wrong

How well you think that we respond to complaints and anti-social behaviour.

- Complaints handling **59.0%**
- anti-social behaviour handling **72.3%**



Diversity and inclusion

Whether you feel you are treated fairly and with respect, and if our homes and services are inclusive and accessible.

- Treated fairly and with respect **82.7%**
- Inclusive and accessible services **77.4%**

78.7%
of you reported overall
satisfaction with Look Ahead

Thank you to everyone who completed a survey, attended a meeting, or shared their views this year!

For more detailed information about how we're performing, have a look at our new Customer Hub on the website: www.lookahead.org.uk/our-performance or scan the QR code





What still needs improvement

The survey showed that complaints handling remains one of our biggest areas for improvement. We've also heard that tenants want clearer communication when things go wrong and more visible improvements to neighbourhoods and communal areas.

Two years ago, we worked with our Tenant and Landlord Panel to create the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Action Plan to make sure we acted on the feedback you gave in the survey.

The plan focused on five priorities:

- Making our homes better
- More visible and engaged staff
- Responding better to anti-social behaviour
- Listening to tenants and acting on feedback
- Better information and communication.

This year's survey gave us the chance to see how we're doing.

What has improved?

Better homes and repairs

Over the last two years we've focused on improving repairs, raising awareness of damp and mould, introducing a new Tenant Handbook and providing clearer information about repair responsibilities.

This year's survey showed improvements in satisfaction with repairs, repair times, home maintenance and home safety.

More visible and engaged staff

You told us you wanted stronger relationships with staff and more opportunities to have your voices heard.

Over the last two years we've increased opportunities for you to speak directly with staff, managers, Board members and senior leaders. We've also been developing our Better Outcomes, Support and Services (BOSS) project to improve people's experience of support.

We have a programme of visiting all our customers who live in our unsupported homes (homes where our customer doesn't have commissioned support) as we recognise there is more we can do to understand your needs.

Better handling of anti-social behaviour

We've reviewed our policies with customers, updated staff training and continued working closely with local partners.

Satisfaction with how we handle anti-social behaviour showed one of the biggest improvements in this year's survey. However, we know there is still more work to do in this area.

Listening and acting on feedback

Customer involvement has continued to grow through our Tenant and Landlord Panel, the Customer Incident Panel, Policy Stars, service design groups and customer involvement in recruitment.

You told us that these opportunities are important, but that you also want to see more clearly how your feedback leads to change.

What happens next?

At our July **Tenant and Landlord Panel** meeting, tenant representatives helped us identify priorities for our next Action Plan.

They told us they would like to see:

- more consistent support, including when your usual support worker is away
- better communication about repairs, including clear timescales and updates
- better communication when issues affect an entire building or service
- a more supportive approach to living standards, focused on helping people achieve their goals and live independently
- clearer evidence that feedback is leading to change

We're improving the information we hold about our customers, so we can better understand your needs and provide services that work for you.

We'll use all of this feedback to refresh our Action Plan for 2026-28 and continue focusing on the things that matter most to you.

Meet our new Chair



We're pleased to welcome **Liz Butler** as the new Chair of Look Ahead's Board. Liz will take up the role on 17 September 2026, succeeding Baroness Mary Watkins of Tavistock, who has served as Chair for the past five years.

Customers helped choose our new Chair. They met with the people applying for the role, shared their experiences of Look Ahead and helped decide who would be the right fit for the organisation. Liz was chosen after meeting both customers and Board members.

Liz has lots of experience helping lead organisations that provide homes, health services and support. She has previously chaired a large NHS organisation and has helped oversee standards in social housing.

We are also pleased to welcome **Beverley Tarka OBE** to the Board as Chair of our Quality and Safety Committee. Beverley has spent more than 30 years working in social care and public services and was awarded an OBE in 2025 for her contribution to adult social care and support for unpaid carers.

Liz said: *"Meeting customers was one of my favourite parts of the selection process. Hearing about your experiences, achievements and ambitions showed me the difference Look Ahead makes in people's lives. I'm looking forward to getting out and about to services, listening to your ideas and meeting as many of you as possible over the coming months."*



Baroness Mary Watkins of Tavistock, outgoing Chair

Many of you may have met Baroness Mary Watkins of Tavistock out and about in services or at Look Ahead events over the last few years. Mary has always taken time to listen to customers and has been a strong champion for making sure your voices are heard.

Please join us in welcoming Liz and Beverley to Look Ahead.

MEET KAREN, LOOK AHEAD'S POLICY MANAGER



focus on that. If I'm doing an investigation, I block out time, to interview people. Then there's the usual stuff, emails meetings, and proofreading policies.

SHARHEENA: WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

KAREN: Watching rugby, especially Saracens and England. Family is very important to me too, I've got two cats and two granddaughters. I love reading and Netflix as well.

Karen Lewis is in charge of all things policy at Look Ahead, she sat down with **Sharron, Sharheena, John and Joy** from the Heads-Up team for an interview about what makes her tick and her thoughts on Policy Stars, a new customer panel that helps us review and approve changes to our policies (*find out more about Policy Stars on page 9*).

SHARRON: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT LOOK AHEAD AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN?

KAREN: I joined Look Ahead for a few reasons. I liked the job description itself and what I saw about the organisation. I was impressed by the way Look Ahead presents itself, particularly through the customer stories on the website. It gave me a strong sense of the impact the organisation has.

Since joining the best thing has been the people, they encourage you to try new things when you have a good idea, it's really empowering.

SHARHEENA: WHAT IS POLICY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR ME?

KAREN: Policy matters because it explains what we can do and how. It helps us follow the law, and means customers know what to expect from us.

It also explains how we will deal with problems, like anti-social

behaviour. If a policy is not working well for customers, they can help us change it and make it better.

JOHN: HOW IMPORTANT WAS IT FOR YOU TO INVOLVE CUSTOMERS AND CREATE POLICY STARS?

KAREN: Massively, I've wanted to do this since I joined. Customers are experts by experience. You know what works and what doesn't. The Policy Stars group has blown me away, and you can be sure we feedback what you say across the organisation.

JOY: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS FOR POLICY STARS?

KAREN: I want to see the group keep growing. You've made a huge impact already. I want you to remember that there's nothing you can't challenge.

SHARRON: WHAT DOES YOUR WORK DAY LOOK LIKE?

KAREN: It depends on what's going on. If I've got a policy meeting coming up, I'll need to

You can read our policies on our website by scanning this QR code or using this link:
lookahead.org.uk/about-us/our-policies/



Have your say on Look Ahead's policies by joining Policy Stars

Look Ahead's policies are there to make sure you know what you can expect from us when we support you. Your views about our policies are important. You can tell us what you think by joining our Policy Stars group.

To find out more, or let us know you are interested in joining, contact gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk or speak to your support worker. **No previous experience required.**

PANEL UPDATES



It's been a busy few months for our Co-Production team at Look Ahead, with customers helping to shape decisions about housing, services, furniture, policies and how we respond to incidents.

Tenant and Landlord Panel (TALP)

Our Tenant and Landlord Panel met in July to review the results of this year's tenant survey and discuss priorities for the next action plan.

Members highlighted communication, complaints and making sure customers understand what changes are being made after they give feedback. These priorities are now helping to shape our next TSM Survey Action Plan – you can read more about this on page 6.

Customer Incidents Panel (CIP)

In June, the Customer Incident Panel discussed restrictive practices, including rules or decisions that limit customers' choices, independence or everyday lives.

Members agreed that customers need clearer information about their rights and how to challenge restrictions they believe are unfair. They also recommended that house rules should be agreed by customers and staff together and reviewed regularly. The panel also highlighted that when a customer experiences a crisis, other residents can be affected and may need support too. It was agreed that crisis planning should consider the wellbeing of everyone involved, not just the person at the centre of the incident.

Customer Focus Groups

In August, customers took part in two co-production workshops at Head Office.

The first focused on furniture in our services, with customers sharing what works well, what could be improved and what helps make a space feel comfortable and homely. Their feedback will help shape plans to improve the furniture provided in our homes.

Later, customers joined commissioners and staff for our third service design workshop for Brenda Road, a new mental health service opening in south London. The group explored ideas for the gardens and agreed priorities including community spaces, year-round planting, private relaxation areas, growing fruit and vegetables, and wildlife-friendly features. These ideas will help shape the final design of the service.

Policy Stars

Policy Stars have been busy reviewing several important policies. They helped shape changes to the Missing Persons Policy, highlighting the importance of staff understanding individual routines, avoiding unnecessary welfare checks and the importance of being welcoming when someone returns to a service.

The group also reviewed the Advocacy Policy, helping to make information clearer and more accessible by improving explanations of advocacy roles and supporting the development of more visual, customer-friendly guidance.

Most recently, they reviewed the Reward and Recognition Policy, sharing feedback about vouchers, training opportunities and other ways to recognise the time, effort and lived experience that customers contribute through involvement activities.

**GET IN
TOUCH**

To get involved with any of our panels, speak to your support worker or housing officer, or email gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk

FREE AND CHEAP OUTINGS, EAST VS WEST!

Did you know there are lots of free and cheap places to enjoy in both east and west London? Here are a few:



Kew Gardens, Kew Road, Richmond, Surrey, London, TW9 3AB (west London). **Price:** £1 if you are in receipt of Universal Credit or Pension Credit, or if you are an asylum applicant with a valid application registration card (ARC). Find out more: www.kew.org/read-and-watch/kew-is-for-everyone



Young V&A,
Cambridge Heath Rd,
Bethnal Green, London
E2 9PA (east London)
Price: Free



Victoria Park,
Grove Road, Bow, London,
E3 5TB (east London)
Price: Free



Holland Park,
Kensington, London,
W8 6LU (west London)
Price: Free



Whitechapel Gallery,
77–82 Whitechapel High
Street, London, E1 7QX
(east London)
**Price: Admission and most
displays are free**, but some
exhibitions may be ticketed.

Send photos from your outings to
gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk

Sharron's Shepherd's Pie Recipe (Serves two)



Ingredients

- 500g potatoes, peeled and cut into even chunks
- 25g butter or margarine
- 2–3 tablespoons milk, if needed, to loosen the mash
- 250g minced lamb, beef or meat-free mince
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 carrots, finely diced
- 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon tomato purée, if you have it
- 1 teaspoon mixed herbs, or herbs of your choice
- 1 x 150g tin garden peas, drained, or a handful of frozen peas
- 1 x 150g tin button mushrooms, drained, or a handful of fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 25g cheddar cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C / 180°C fan / Gas Mark 6.
2. Put the potatoes in a pan of salted water; bring to the boil and cook for 15–20 minutes, or until soft.
3. While the potatoes cook, brown the mince in a large frying pan over a medium heat for 5–7 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon. If using meat-free mince, follow the packet guidance and avoid overcooking it.
4. Add the onion and carrots. Cook for 5–8 minutes, stirring regularly, until the onion has softened and the carrots have started to soften.
5. Stir in the chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, herbs, peas and mushrooms. Simmer for 15–20 minutes, until the sauce has thickened and the carrots are tender. Season with salt and pepper. If the mixture looks dry, add a splash of water; if it looks too wet, simmer for a few more minutes.
6. Drain the potatoes well, then mash with the butter or margarine. Add a little milk if needed, and season with salt and pepper.
7. Spoon the mince and vegetable mixture into a small ovenproof dish. Spread the mashed potato evenly over the top and rough it up with a fork so it crisps in the oven.
8. Scatter the grated cheese over the top.
9. Bake for 20–25 minutes, until the top is golden and the filling is bubbling at the edges. If assembling from cold, bake for 35–40 minutes instead, until piping hot throughout.
10. Leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

NOTICE BOARD



PROTECT THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO YOU

Your landlord's insurance covers the building, but it does not usually cover your personal belongings.

But, contents insurance can help cover the cost of replacing your belongings if they are damaged, destroyed, or stolen. This can include:

- Furniture
- Carpets and curtains
- TVs, laptops and other electrical items
- Clothing and shoes
- Personal possessions and valuables

You could face significant costs replacing your belongings. Contents insurance can help provide peace of mind and financial protection.

For more information about affordable contents insurance for social housing residents, visit the My Home Contents Insurance scheme by scanning this QR code.



This scheme is promoted by National Housing Federation and Thistle Tenant Risks



Want to give feedback or make a complaint?

Tell a support worker or the service manager or contact Look Ahead's Feedback and Complaints Team team on feedback@lookahead.org.uk or calling 0333 010 4600.



Want to know more about your rights as a social housing tenant and how to stand up for them?

Four Million Homes offers free information, training and webinars to help residents understand social housing, deal with common issues, and have their voices heard. You can find guidance on repairs, anti-social behaviour, working with your landlord, and much more. Visit: www.fourmillionhomes.org

Four Million Homes

Knowledge and action for change in social housing

SAMARITANS

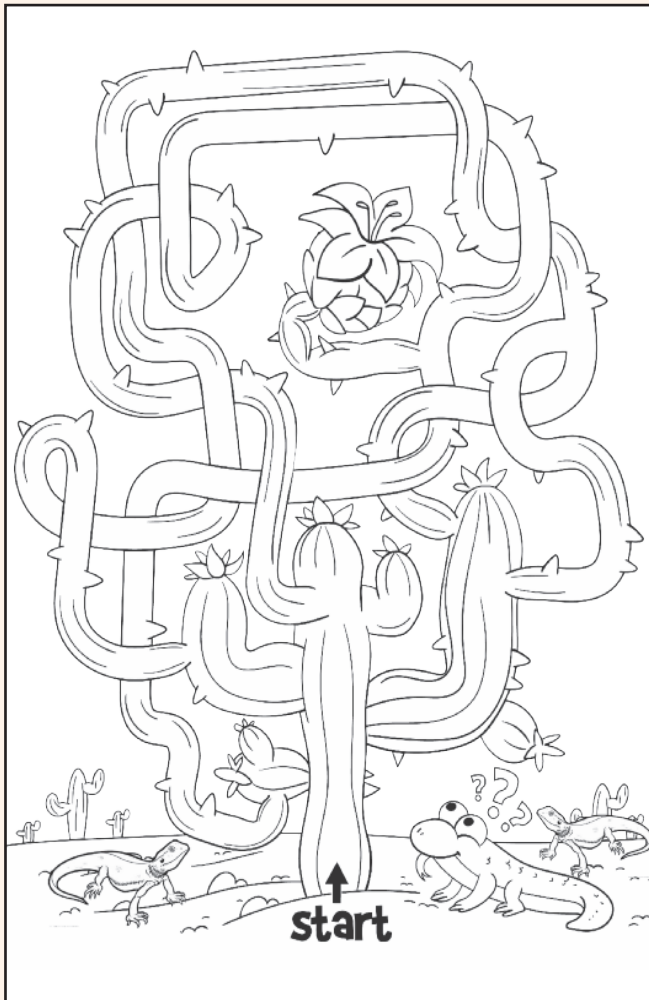
If you need someone to talk to, you can call Samaritans for free at any time day or night on

116 123

FUN AND GAMES

MAZE ACTIVITY

Find your way to the flower, then colour in.



A JOKE FOR YOU



Question: Why did the doughnut go to the dentist?

Answer: Because it needed a filling!

QUIZ QUESTION



The Eiffel Tower gets taller in the summer.

True or false?

(Answer at the bottom of the page)

Look Ahead
CARE, SUPPORT AND HOUSING

Get involved at Look Ahead:
gettinginvolved@lookahead.org.uk

Email Look Ahead: getintouch@lookahead.org.uk

Call Look Ahead: 0333 010 4600

Look Ahead, Cally Yard,
439 Caledonian Road, London, N7 9BG.

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