The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) is one of the 32 boroughs making up Greater London. It is located to the east of city centre on the north bank of the River Thames.

The area is unique in terms of its physical and socio-economic geography. It is ranked in the top 5 most deprived local authorities in England in terms of its residents. It includes the office district of Canary Wharf and therefore receives large numbers of relatively affluent incomers daily.

At a neighbourhood scale it is a complex mosaic of small pockets of recently developed affluence in close proximity to areas of high deprivation. Pressure on land for development is high so the urban landscape is dynamic.

**Business Need**

Like all councils, LBTH are driving through a broad range of e-Government initiatives. A significant number are delivered in a joined-up manner through the Tower Hamlets Partnership, a group of key stakeholders which include residents, the council, the police, the health service, public services, voluntary and community groups, faith communities and businesses.

Partners are well aware that tailoring and targeting services effectively is vital to prioritise and direct scarce resources at those in greatest need. An initial scoping study into improving neighbourhood knowledge management recommended the need for a specialist Business Intelligence tool that would allow partners to collate, manage and share statistical and indicator based data at multiple geographic levels.

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**Case Study**

The Tower Hamlets Local Strategic Partnership required a solution to build up a locality-based evidence repository of data and intelligence. This would allow partners to collate, manage and share statistical and performance indicators to support the delivery of the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. InstantAtlas enabled the partnership to implement a Local Intelligence System (LIS) in 3 months which now complements the councils corporate performance management system. The platform is available through their public web site and allows partners to exchange small area data and inform communities on the changing characteristics of their neighbourhoods.
Led by the Council’s Performance and Information Team the Partnership undertook an open tendering exercise to select an off-the-shelf Local Information System solution that integrated with their corporate software architecture (Microsoft and ESRI technologies).

InstantAtlas was selected as meeting the integration requirements and delivering the vast majority of required functionality out-of-the-box. The modular product is built on top of Microsoft SQL Server and provides end-users with multiple ‘channels’ to access the underlying indicator data. This is critical to meet the needs of the wide range of potential users from specialist data analysts to senior level managers to citizens.

**InstantAtlas**

InstantAtlas includes sophisticated area profile reporting tools, interactive dashboards, and more advanced tabulation, charting and mapping tools. Customers can keep all their geographic data in an existing central spatial data warehouse and effectively ‘plug-in’ their web mapping into InstantAtlas to support interactive geographic tools. Behind-the-scenes a web-based management console allows one or more administrators to manage user accounts and respective permissions, provide XML based data and metadata load tools, and design the structure and content of outputs.

Key to the solution was meeting the tight deadlines for development of the solution. An operational test site was available within 4 weeks with a pre-live version ready within 2.5 months. Timescales depended on defining and processing relevant data content from internal and external sources, loading these into the system and designing appropriate outputs to meet the wide range of potential users. The Performance and Information team worked jointly with the InstantAtlas team to do this.

The operational application, THIS (Tower Hamlets Information System) Borough, is integrated into the public Internet site for LBTH and is now available from: [http://thisborough.towerhamlets.gov.uk/](http://thisborough.towerhamlets.gov.uk/) It is supported by a full-time administrator. The application is also available through the dedicated Tower Hamlets Partnership site.

**Summary benefits**

THIS Borough provides a definitive evidence base for localities – in effect a ‘one-stop-shop’ for comprehensive local level data. It offers an information management framework that delivers a localised, cross-organisational picture. It enables LBTH to create a neighbourhood level audit of current state and monitor the impact of policy and practice over time. It encourages a more consistent and formal approach to data management across the Partnership and enables data to be shared effectively.

In relation to Local Area Agreement objectives it provides the ‘detailed intelligence context’ behind the relatively small number of performance indicators at coarse scales managed in the corporate performance management (PM) system. It acts as a key reporting tool, complementing their PM system, to support decision-making, policy development and resource targeting. Finally, in line with recent DCLG initiatives to encourage engagement of local communities, it allows LBTH to inform their citizens on key performance outcomes at a level that is relevant and meaningful – their local neighbourhood.

**Verdict**

"InstantAtlas offers the Tower Hamlets Partnership a best practice, ‘off-the-shelf’ neighbourhood information system that provides value for money and integrates well with core LBTH IT infrastructure from Microsoft and ESRI. It will be key to supporting a framework for managing and reporting local performance outcomes across our Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement. The InstantAtlas team has demonstrated a sound knowledge of our data and technical requirements and has delivered a solution meeting our key requirements within our tight deadlines." Louise Russell, Head of Partnership Performance, and Robin Harris, THIS Borough Manager.

See also: [http://thisborough.towerhamlets.gov.uk/](http://thisborough.towerhamlets.gov.uk/)

Note: Tower Hamlets chose Instant Profiler, subsequently rebranded as InstantAtlas Data Server.