

Gregory Sanziri**Resident, 1993 – 2009**

I was a leaseholder on the estate for 15 years up until I was pressured into accepting the council's offer of compensation in Jan 2009. I was told if I didn't accept the offer of £104,000 for my flat then it would be revalued downwards. I remember going to a meeting with Councillor Kim Humphreys and he said *"either you accept what we are offering or we will take you to court"*.

By that time most of my neighbours were gone and I was one of the last people left in the block. I had recently been burgled, and became worried thinking that something might happen to me.

All these factors coupled with the pressure they put on me for the valuation made me feel like I didn't have a choice – I felt like everything beneath me was giving way and I had to move out. People didn't have the nerves to fight - they couldn't hold out under those conditions. The money they offered me wasn't enough to buy

anything anywhere, because by that time property prices all over London had sky-rocketed. So I asked to be rehoused but they said my income was too high.

I decided I just had to get out, so I took the compensation, put my belongings into storage and rented a room in Croydon. I had a couple of friends down in Croydon so I contacted them and told them the situation that had befallen me, and they offered to help me look around for something down there where prices were lower.

I ended up having to make a lot of sacrifices: with the money that I received there was no way that I could even afford anything in Croydon, so I was forced to take out another mortgage. And when you have lived in your own flat for 15 years on your own and are used to doing things a certain way, all of a sudden for you to be kicked out and have to rent a room living in a shared house with other people - it wasn't something I had wanted or found easy, it affected me a lot but I just had to get on with it.



Friends and family used to come and visit me at the Elephant more often. Now if they are coming from East London to visit me in Croydon there is an extra 40 mins to the journey. My workplace used to be in South Kensington so I used to just hop on the 360 bus - it was always so convenient living at the Elephant. It's so central, you can go anywhere from here. Now my office has moved to Euston I have to travel in from Croydon every day.

Southwark council disappointed me: I had every faith in the council and they let me down - they let me down big time. Any time you went into the offices you could see that the officers had some kind of attitude: they treated you as if you weren't human; there was a certain perception assuming that you had come in to create problems. No-one should be treated in that manner, it is inhumane and I wouldn't want anyone else to go through it.

I was treated inhumanely by a council, which as a local authority is supposed to look after its residents. I think they put financial gain, – no, personal interest above the interests of residents and people who live in the borough. That was the only logical conclusion I could come to. Cllr Humphries should never have been in public service: his language was that of the private sector – it was all about profit and economy not people.

It Takes quite a while when you move to a new area. It takes time getting to know people, your

neighbours will look at you from a distance because they don't know who you are, and that's just human nature. You have to try to start building bridges all over again and get yourself into a community - it isn't that easy and it takes quite some time.

If I were to say that all this hasn't deeply affected me then I would be lying. I don't think I will ever fully recover from the effect of what has happened. It has made me mistrust authorities - my friends tell me that I have become very skeptical.



It's so sad when I see the Heygate now, they just kicked people out and left the place to ruin – it is criminal what they have done.